

GALGANO'S
WOOING
AND
OTHER POEMS



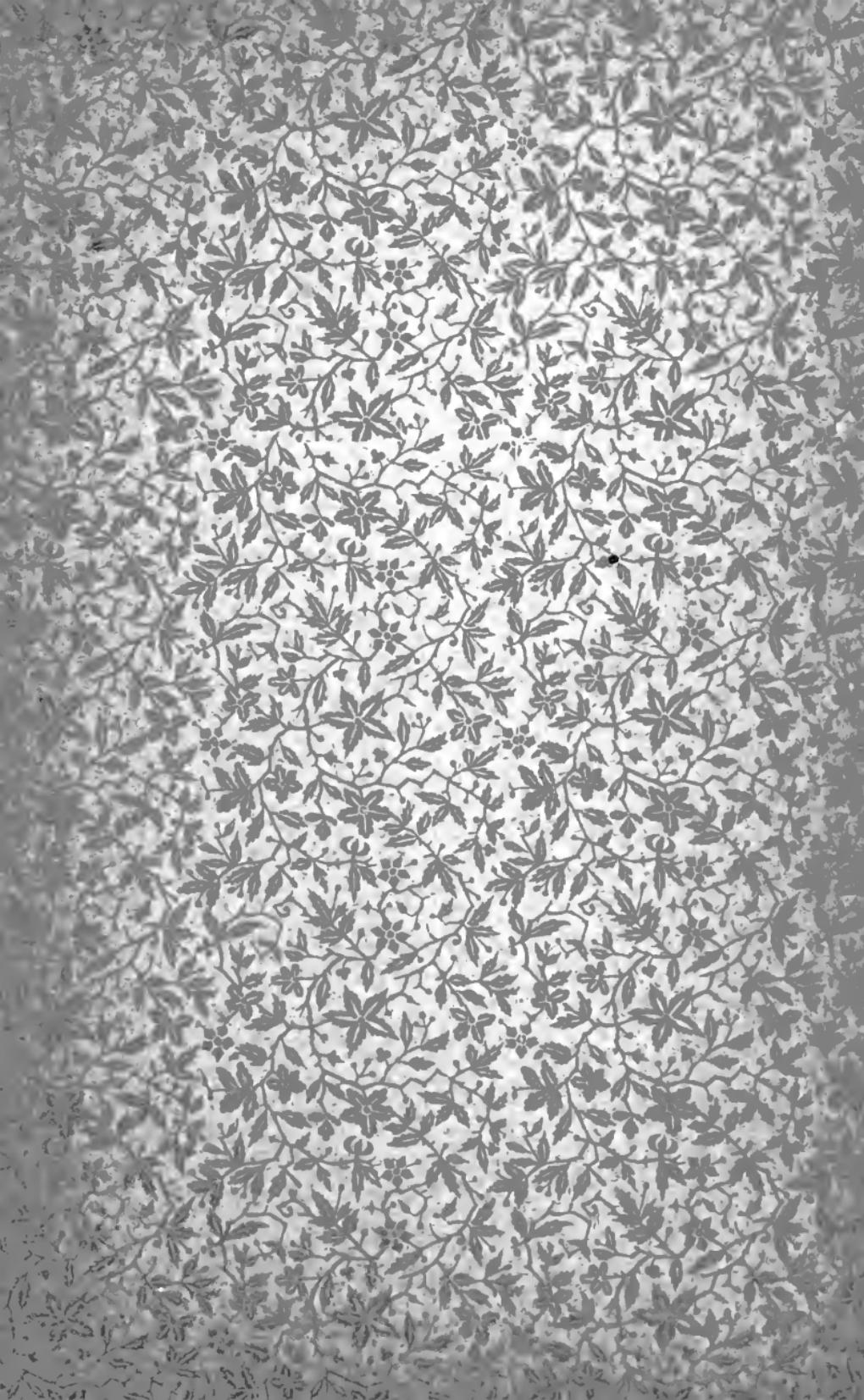
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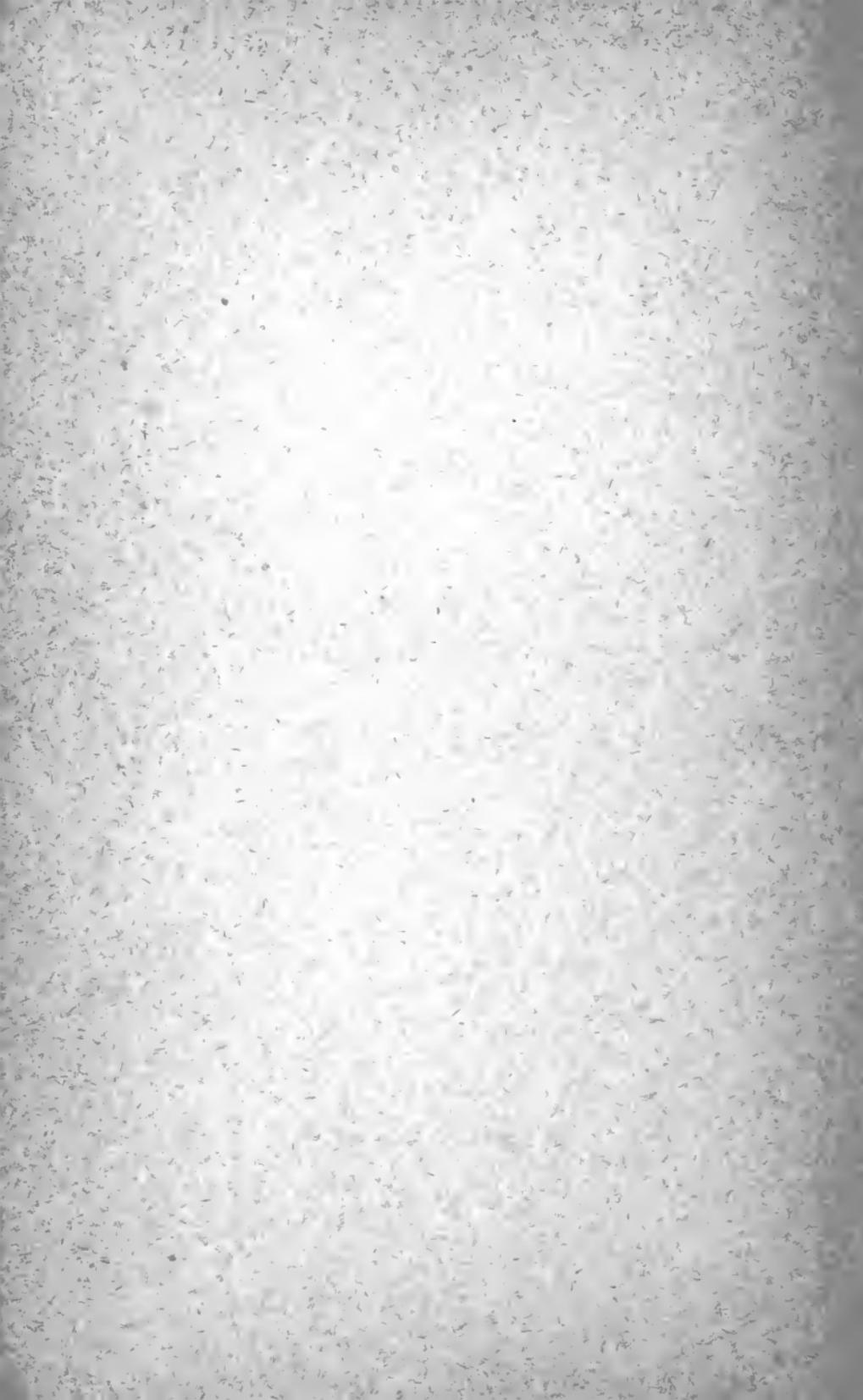
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GALGANO'S WOOING AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

SARAH BRIDGES STEBBINS.

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GALGANO'S WOOING.



POEMS.

—:o:—

GALGANO'S WOOING.

O, weary is that hapless lover's fate
Who loves too well because he loves too late ;
Who dreams of heaven in a burning lake
Without one grateful drop his thirst to slake ;
Who worships still the virtue he deplores,
And yet would fain destroy what he adores !
Such contradictions sway one human soul,
That best and worst alike its aims control !
And thus Galgano, a most noble youth
Famed in Sienna for his worth and truth,
Cast all the hope and interest of his life
On Messer Stricca's fair and stainless wife.
But careless of his passion and his pain,
Contented calmly o'er her home to reign,
Monaccio passed her dreamless, peaceful days

Secure in pleasure at her husband's praise ;
Nor ever thought to try her honor's might
By dangerous dalliance on the verge of right.
Nor deemed could be beneath her placid ease
Unmeasured depths of unmoved sympathies.
In vain Galgano at the tourney wore
Her colors, and the prize of bravery bore,
No thrill of pride enkindled softer glance
For him alone her beauty to enhance ;
In vain at festivals he followed nigh
And where she was stood ever watchful by
Her shadow but her shadow was to her,
Nor in her heart or path made change or stir.
Indifference quells not love but feeds its fire,
While 'neath cool scorn its mounting flames aspire ;
So message after message she disdained,
His gifts declined, and all his ardor gained
Was thus provoked by quenchless zeal pursued,
She sometimes thought of him in angry mood.

Yet still Galgano, when by hope forsook,
Some specious counsel with his reason took ;
“ Why should I strive,” he said, “ with selfish hand
To pluck this pure white lily ? Better stand
Unblessed afar, and see it spotless shine
In sunny garden that can ne'er be mine !
That so my soul, thus taught true grace to know,
By sacramental sacrifice shall grow
In likeness of this innocence unbroke,

And drop abashed desire's enslaving yoke !
For ah ! if passion with its simoon power
But touch the leaves 'twill wither all the flower.
And love's own breath could never kiss away
Earth's darkening dust whose poison joy would slay!"
And then some vision of her witching face
Cold resolution's theory would chase,
And Circean memory again restore
Assurance faint to urge this quest once more.

Once Messer Stricca and his lovely wife
To taste the sweets of quiet country life
Their summer villa sought ; and hovering nigh
This lover bold, ere many days went by,
With hawk on wrist forever hunting seemed,
While still of dove uncaught he only dreamed ;
And Messer Stricca, with no guess of wrong,
Thus gladly met and greeted him ere long,
With social courtesy then his entrance pressed
To that charmed house with her dear presence blest ;
But stammering heartfelt thanks he yet declined,
Stung with an honest shame but half defined,
To have thus yielded as to trusted friend
The easy means to his alluring end.
Then cursing his own pride he went his way ;
And lo, it chanced his footsteps sprang a jay ;
Swift as a thought he gave his hawk the wing
That failed not soon the quarry down to bring
Close to the villa door ; the bird's sharp cry

Had brought the lady to the balcony,
Who with her husband watched the skill and grace
With which the falcon followed in the chase,
And how the game at last was struck so true
The struggle scarce began before 'twas through ;
"Mark this fine hawk," then Messer Stricca said,
"How well it works ; the vanquished jay is dead.
'Tis like its master, perfect of its kind
As he is first in person and in mind,
Sienna's boast in courage and in wit
Mere lauding words can scarce his merit fit ;
But as before his falcon fell the jay
Must women-hearts surrender to his sway !"
"And what may be this peerless hero's name ?"
The lady careless asked ; the answer came
With more of noble praise, "Galgano, love !"
Quick pulsed her blood ; she gently leaned above
The stricken bird, and he but heard her say
In accents sorrowful, "Poor Jay ! poor Jay !"

Ah, so mysterious is woman's mind,
That like Eolian harp played by the wind,
Its music rises oft from unseen cause
Of subtle influence unswayed by laws !
And thus her husband's eulogy awoke
The love Galgano never could evoke
With all the earnestness of his own suit ;
And such strange seed bore speedy, ripened fruit ;
For brooding tenderly on this high praise

Her heart recalled his image and his ways
Who "first in all Sienna" humbly gave
To her alone the homage of a slave?
And o'er her former coldness that repelled
Such rare perfection tears of wonder welled;
She sighing feared his hope had thus been killed,
And blushing then with fond prevision thrilled.
So when on embassy of moment sent
Good Messer Stricca to Perugia went,
Monaccio dispatched a message kind
Unto Galgano, promised he should find
Her old indifference changed to courteous grace
And long-desired audience face to face.
The sad dejection of despairing mood
Was whelmed in sudden joy's Elysian flood,
And buoyed on expectation's blissful height
Enchanted air swift bore him to delight;
For as the lady gave him welcome sweet,
He threw himself enraptured at her feet
And breathed the story of his love at last
And all the suffering of the cruel past,
And as she looked at him with softened eyes
And murmured tenderly her glad replies,
Both fondly deemed that in that rapturous hour
Life's dreams perfected bloomed in crowning flower.

Of love's pure nectar quaffing draughts divine,
By feast untasted of rare fruits and wine

Served in his honor and 'mid roses spread,
They sat in that delicious silence bred
Of heart shared sestasy which words profane,
That exaltation in which man would gain
The borders infinite, save that his flight
To soaring feelings untranscended height
Stirs Nature's depths where lie the founts of pain,
And causeless sadness springs to draw again
The human to its level. In the light
Of this celestial mood Monaccio's sight
Caught sudden gleams of inner self intense,
That underlying life's less fervid sense,
In unsuspected passion's natal hour
Affrighted peace with undeveloped power ;
While to Galgano inspiration came
Of love surpassing thrilling mortal flame,
Through crucifixion of the flesh endured
Of its own blest eternity secured.
But like the flitting of an angel's wings,
That passing holiness to earth's air brings
And bears a promise of the higher sphere,
Then leaves the breeze that from all blossom near
Gathers the fragrance of this world instead ;
Before new joys these revelations fled ;
And then, in lover's wont, oft telling o'er
The hopes and fears that swayed his soul of yore,
Although his happiness scarce deemed it strange,
He asked the reason of his lady's change.

A something mournful echoed in her tone,
And in her eyes a floating sadness shone
As thus she answered with her face aglow ;
“ Galgano, now I love you, love you so,
With feeling sudden born full-grown and strong
That in my heart must sure have hidden long,
Unnoticed springing 'neath my tranquil days
Till summoned into life by startling praise ;
And of my love will truly tell you all !”
And then she bade his memory recall
That signal day she watched his falcon's flight
When struggling jay she was struck before her sight;
And told how Messer Stricca warmly spoke
The commendation that love's yearning woke ;
And as she murmured generous tribute o'er,
Drooping his noble head, he felt once more
Through throbbing pulses honor's immanence
As smitten conscience strove with eager sense ;
“ If I should wrong this trusting man ;” he thought,
Who thus of mere good fame such dream hath
wrought
Of lofty worthiness, it will not be
In me alone, but in humanity
That he would lose belief ; his soul as well
As she and I would thus take hold on hell.”
And then in majesty of truth and faith
His loyal spirit rose ; o'er time and death
With clear eyes gazed upon God's secret things,
Upborne by strength renunciation brings.

He seized a flower perfect in each part
From paler outer leaves to crimson heart,
And o'er it silent mused ; the lady too
In silence sat, half-mazed, half-awed to view
His mien and action, yet without offence
At seeming slight, in love's first confidence
Assured that explanation soon would show
Some happy meaning such strange course below.

Slowly he spoke at last, " Monaccio,
As this fair rose, all lovely things below
Methinks are images of those unseen,
Material outbirths into world terrene
Of spirit prototypes in higher lands,
And when each soul within their glory stands,
Remembrance of these mortal effigies
Shall swell and balance heavenly ecstacies,
And like earth's joys foreshadowed in a dream
Make an eternal home familiar seem ;
Thus too our love, as this perfected flower
Whose beauty and whose fragrance in this hour
Have reached the zenith of its peerless bloom,
May be but counterpart 'mid transient doom
Of that celestial rapture's changeless flow
That intermingling spirits ever know.
Ah, who can tell if my hot hand should crush
To drooping ruin this sweet blossom's blush,
That thus perchance its antitype or soul
May be like maimed ; and when I reach the goal

We go to through the grave, and wondering pass
Through forms supreme once seen as through a glass,
A shade may fall upon the path of light
From memory's remorse, should shrinking sight
Behold this flower marred 'mid moulds divine,
Or miss in Paradise this rose of thine.
So too if we should smite immortal love
With passion's sure decay, in realms above
Regret and shame might canker heavenly bliss
Of deathless dream whose promise is in this !
Or, it might be that wronged by human life
'Twould die for aye when ceases carnal strife ;
And, as unending punishment, its loss
Change all Elysium's other joys to dross ;
But if unsullied faithful kept below
Of its own pureness everlasting grow !"

Bewildered first, and then with prescience pale,
The lady felt the heart within her fail,
Half doubting if he scorned her that her pride
Had striven not her yielding mood to hide ;
Then thrilled with fear at words that shadow bore
Of high resolve that he would come no more ;
Nor rose with him the flesh and sense above
To heights sublime where love o'er mastered love,
Till as she listened, gazing on his face
And saw it kindle with ennobling grace,
Her husband's praise of truth without a stain
Re-echoed in her troubled thought again,

And woke a woman's yearning to upsoar
Unto her lover's level ; but once more
Love vanquished aspiration, and a strain
Rang through her answering voice of bitter pain ;
“ Galgano, we are young, and life is long ;
I, but a woman, with a soul scarce strong
As thine to stand alone and seer-like gaze
Beyond the limits of our mortal days
On world I know not from the world I know—
I—I would change not one sweet hour below
Of rapture sure like that we shared to-night
For dim eternity's untried delight !
Oh ! canst thou love me as thou earnest swore
And banish love to Heaven's distant shore ?
And if we part, oh love, if we should part,
Some other happier, unwedded heart,
For which thine honor would not wounded be,
Would win thy very memory from me !”
Then as the sudden tears o'erflowed her eyes,
Low at her feet he knelt with anguished cries :
“ My love ! my love ! look down into my face,
Read there my agony's unerring trace !
Do I not love thee ? O Monaccio,
Glad would I all the coming years forego
To hold thee as mine own once here below !
No higher joy could earth e'er hope to know !
But like dividing waves of pathless sea,
Sadder than death there rolls 'twixt thee and me
· My threatening conscience, and his wrong whose trust

Is 'gainst my selfish dream like God's hand thrust !
But oh, beyond, beyond this passing life,
Its ties, its passions, and this awful strife,
Thou wilt be mine, be mine, Monaccio,
Forever mine, unstained as Northern Snow !
And evermore as now remembrance clear
To keep of this one hour to both so dear,
To nurse unchanging hope of bliss divine,
With every future thought my Christ's and thine,
I go from hence to convent cell secure,
And 'neath the cross will ceaseless there adjure
The thorn-crowned Saviour that thy days may be
Blest with His peace till He gives thee to me !"

With brow uplifted as towards Heaven's light
She seemed an angel rising in his sight ;
His noble nature had her spirit fired
And glow of sacrifice her mien inspired ;
" Our God has sent this worthy love," she said,
To draw us to Himself ; we hence are dead
To life's worst tempting, for 'twas His own voice
Called thee through suffering to thy holy choice ;
Nor dare I bid thee to the world again,
Where luring sin might prove salvation's bane !
And I will strive thy righteousness to share,
And give response unto thy every prayer
By daily duties done in lofty faith
Of compensating sweetness after death !
And see, though here we part for all our years,

My eyes, Galgano, drop no more salt tears
For gladness that thou saved me ! I but felt
A little hour agone love only dwelt
Within my heart of flesh, and did repeat
“ ‘Twould live for thee while that full heart should
beat !

But now—Oh, I have come through thee to know
I am a soul ; and that true love can grow
In souls alone ; for hearts and hands are dust
But souls immortal are ! Nor time, nor rust
Souls' treasures can corrupt !—Adieu ! adieu !—”
She floated like a vision from his view ;
Mists dimmed his sight, his blood pulsed hot and fast ;
He stretched his arms to her ; his passion past
Swept like a flood athwart his reeling will ;
“ Return, return !” he hoarsely breathed ; but still
She drew not nigh ; “ O come !” then rang his cry,
“ Come back, Monaccio, or else I die !”—
But only from the distance softly fell
Upon his swooning sense “ Farewell ! farewell !”

THE OLD LOVE.



BEFORE.

HE.

'Tis five and thirty years ! So long ! so long !
Yet when I free my soul from out the leash
Of will that holds it to the present term,
Let it leap sudden back, there is no time
Betwixt that day and this ; so strong, so real
Was that one life of life ! So empty, vain,
Worthless and shadowy existence since !
Yet I have earned my honors, won my spurs,
And now—at sixty—men account my name
A nation's pride ! My God ! I'd give it all—
Fame, knowledge, wealth and state, to have again
One of those hours of youth with my dear love !
Those summer hours, when from the sunshine crept
A subtle softness through the heart and veins !
When o'er the stream and trees and shining grass
Brooded a still repose, that gave to earth
A sort of sacred pureness that infused
And changed emotion into rapture sweet
As high and holy as the bliss of heaven !
When we, love blended in a speechless dream,
Had scarcely sense but that we twain were one ;
Not woman, man, she, me, or flesh and blood,

But being only, out of human raised.
 And infinite in the divineness deep
 Of our celestial mood ! Those hours ! those hours !
 So few, so precious yet, when she was mine !
 Thank God, thank God, that I have never been
 Another woman's since, have never swerved
 From my enshrined memory of her,
 E'en to the toying with fair, willing hand !
 Have kept a solitude in inner self
 And longing quenched in work ! For once she said,
 'Mid her white anguish in that parting scene
 " 'Tis but for Time. Whatever may betide,
 Not one, the nearest, e'er shall enter in
 My spirit's secret place where thou alone
 Shalt be shut close. And when I pass away,
 Am free from this world's circumstance, be sure
 That thou wilt find me in the great beyond
 Thy very, very own ! All life shall be
 But death till then !"

Those words have kept
 A steadfast faith for me through black despair,
 Through awful weariness of all things ; e'en
 'Mid reason's shrinking at appalling thought
 Of immortality, brain-questioning
 Of "Wherefore?" and "What use of it?" and dread
 Of ennui's possible in endlessness !
 For in my heart of heart hope slew grim doubt
 With promise of love's ceaseless ecstasy.
 And yet—it stings, stings worse than serpent fangs—

This knowledge of my kind that I have won
In this long strife for power and for place !
Do I not know that woman, e'en as man,
Lives many lives, is feeling's palimest,
Where each new writing covers o'er the last,
And that one last the only legible
E'en to themselves ? Have I not seen resolve,
The highest, finest, proudest, yielded up,
Though slowly it might be as hardest rock
Wears 'neath the water's drop, through daily means
Of unperceived effect ? How can I then
Keep trust that she, so tender through her sex,
So wielded by impressions through the needs
Of her soft nature, could have stood alone
An unchanged Inner Me as I have done !
It scarce can be, but howsoe'er she clung
With struggle or intent to that old past,
The mouldering power of experience new
On coming always must have swept it off,
And other loves extinguished the first fire ;
For she has been a wife and mother since ;
And what devotion can e'er hold its own
Against a mother's yearning for her child ? . .
And she was wondrous capable of love,
So that it seemed as if she could not live
But in some love, or in love's atmosphere !
Yet "Not the nearest e'er," she said that day—
And how she looked, upstanding straight and pale
To say it without faltering—how she looked—

As if all wills imperious that ruled
This earth from its beginning met in hers
And set the sternness of persistent force
Forever on her face !—It flashed on me
That I had known but part of her till then,
That she herself—that none had ever known
What height, what depth, what might there was in her!
Was it but spark struck from the moment's stress,
Or true reverse of character's mild show ?
Alas ! How know I ? For self-exiled then
I have beheld her but in memory since !
And now in my old age I come anear,
And all the years fall off, and I am stirred
To see her once again. Though she may be
Bowed down and wrinkled with her many cares
And white-haired as myself, yet I shall know
All truth of her in meeting face to face !

SHE.

This letter—this—'tis like the voice of Christ
Calling to Lazarus ; it conquers death,
Loosens my cerements, stirs life in me !
Not in this world, and with my mortal eyes
Did I e'er think to see him once again !
Now, after all these years he comes to me !
And lo ! the joy and pain of that old time
Strives with long deadness, as within that grave
At far-off Bethany, renewing life

Throbbed faint at first with all the gasps and throes
Of an oncoming birth. And I had deemed
That I should only wake from death once more
When I should spring from earth to the unknown
And leave this crypt of my existence here !

'Tis nigh on two score years since there was slain
The woman that I was ; slain, buried deep
Within the silence of my secret soul !

This woman that I am is dead, dead, dead,
Since life is from the inward, and in me
The inward is a tomb that shut close in
My all of love ! This counterfeited me,
This breathing simulacrum of mere flesh,
Subsists but in externals, ne'er has let
One feeling touch a depth, or pierce below
The skin-deep show of knowledge how to act ;
Has been all head, stronger and clearer head
In that no heart cast up enfeebling mists !

What are these years to me ? Not years of life—
But sleep—a night's sleep—full of changing dreams ;
And scarce have left more trace than just a sleep.
Forms bend, hands wither, dark hair bleaches white
Of those who open their interior selves
To sorrow, care, remorse, despair, and all
Emotion's train, that leave their ageing marks.
I knew not hope, nor grief, nor bliss, nor fret,
Since that one day I died. The dead feel naught.
But now these simple lines, these formal words
That ask an interview, strike through the cold

And dull obstruction of sepulchral dark,
And unsealed stone begins to roll away.
Through sleep, through dreams, go back, go back,
 my soul,
And quicken into life again 'neath memory's tone !
Not to those days, ah, never to those days
Of exquisite delight in love's first glow,
Lest such distress should seize on thee as filled
The banished host at sight of heaven lost !
But back unto the last of thy old life,
Revive the anguish, tell the story o'er,
And reassure thyself that thou hast kept
The promise made then ne'er to live again
Till thou wert his once more—beyond the grave !

The only daughter of an ancient house,
Youth and my human were so strong in me
That all their thought of lineage and birth
Was as an idle song. Earth's rank and wealth
But outward gauds that decked the naked man.
My love had but his manhood. I, with him,
Was simple woman, nought disguised by state
Or circumstance. Condition, name, fell off
When his arms wrapped me in, my heart next his
To one embodied feeling all transformed.
But those akin disdained his lower grade
Of social place, nor stooped from their own sphere
In cognizance of character and worth ;
And with the shallow arrogance of gold

Esteemed unchosen poverty a crime ;
And sought with railings, arguments and sneers
To root impressions out engraft with life ;
But could not change with pleadings, reasons, threats,
The Me which was become all Love. Besides,
My instincts, in world-sophistries untrained,
Clung fast to my own ownership, and held
The right inalienable to be
My own disposer ; brethren, sire, might claim
Affection, interest, by the tie of blood,
But equal with the daughter's, sister's debt
Birth brought to individual free soul
Interior enfranchisement from bonds.
So spite of all forbiddings, still we met,
And spite of urgings of another suit
Of one who patient came in fond belief
That while he waited on fruit out of reach
Would ripen, and at last fall in his hand.
We scarce had thought or fear but our strong wills
Would make our oneness an acknowledged truth,
And somehow, wrapped in our Elysian dream,
We did not realize that it could end ;
Till, warm and rosy with my love's last kiss,
One day with springing step I wended home
Through the long avenue of stately trees
That led thereto ; and sudden, face to face
My father met, all pale, with troubled eyes.
He linked my arm in his, subdued my pace
To his slow tread, and sighed like one in pain.

I see him still—shall I e'er cease to see
That slender figure and that high-bred air,
Those thin, cold lips, and glances sidelong cast?
“He had a late to tell that I must hear,”
He softly said ; and then unraveled forth
An unsuspected history of ill.

How he in politics entangled grew,
Although in ignorance of Law's great maze ;
And partly out of vanity to be
A leader, first ; and from excitement part,
Got mixed with the wrong men, who, sharp and sly.
Made him, unwitting still, their flattered tool
To work their evil, and without intent—
“God knows,” he said, “without the least intent,”
He found himself deep dyed in treason's guilt,
And liable at any moment near
To loss of honor, fortune, life itself.
He could not bear the old name should be stained,
And those he loved cast out to hard world's wrath ;
And there was but one way, but only one,
And it all rested upon me, to save
Honor and name, and life and gold ; on me ;
On my small hand—and then he held it close,
Lest when I heard it all I should start off
And spurn the earth that bred such plotting brains,
This suitor, who had taken no repulse,
Held, of this danger, all the clues and proofs,
Had such strong interest to betray the whole
That but by equaling advantages

Could he be rendered safe. That he loved me
I knew full well; would proffer soon his love;
Then if I wedded him would do no harm
Against his marriage ties. If I refused,
'Twould add a spur to possible intent,
A vengeful motive unto self-weal sure.
Certain he was that daughter of his house
Would let no girlish fancy interpose
Between her duty and her kin's sore need !

All this he spoke with that unruffled calm,
Scarce raising his low voice, that breeding gives
Unto patrician manners, so that one,
Seeing us walk there 'twixt the bordering trees,
Might think an idyl of a father's love,
And child's responsive trust.

The sun shone on,

Afar the fields lay bright like pictures framéd
Between the mighty trunks. The peaceful sky,
Serenely blue and still, spread over all,
And at my feet as blue a violet slept—
And ever since a violet has been
Death's symbol, and its scent a charnel smell !
My bounding blood turned cold. Should I refuse,
To live the murderer of my household race,
And poison all my future with remorse
By satisfying selfhood's reckless bent ?
Or with consent destroy all life in me,
And die forevermore to hope and joy ?

And *he*—his trust—his happiness—My God,
 What awful anguish seized me at that thought !
 I wrenched myself away from this man's grasp—
 My foe who slew my life with his ill deeds,
 Effacing fatherhood by holding fast
 To blood-link, not for love's sake, but base use—
 And fled, fled swift as if with hunted feet
 To my lone lair, to darkness, and such strife
 As devils must be glad of when they gloat
 O'er sin-wrought suffering.

At the early dawn,

I sought the trysting place, and summoned him,—
 My Love, my Love, I called you from your dreams
 Of passionate delight to meet a doom !—
 Ah, how it stirs, this re-awakening life !
 Be still, be still, my soul, and read thy weird !
 Ah no ! Ah no ! E'en I, within the grave
 Of years' repression, cannot, dare not look
 Upon that morn again ! I should spring up
 Too quick alive, and quivering with old pain !—
 God's nobles do not always wear a star !
 My father was a noble, and that one
 He spoke of, wore their orders on their breasts
 For men to mark the fineness of their caste !
 But this—this love of mine—no ribbon had
 To deck his rare worth then ! Yet God He knows
 If any on the earth was e'er his peer !
 His manhood shone through all that anguished time
 As guiding light amid a dreadful storm !

But I—I died—I died there in his arms !
The woman that went back to face a fate
Was but the outer casing of a corpse,
Like those Egyptian sepulchres that bear
The surface likeness of a human face !

That very day this other suitor came,
Protesting ardent love—he called it Love
That bargained for possession, took no heed
Of hurt or shrinking in the heart he wooed—
To me, who died for it—to me—who knew
Of one whose life was martyrdom for loss—
That one who would have gone through fiercest fire
And smiled 'mid flames to save me from a pang !
“ We will not talk of love,” I coldly said ;
“ You know it not ; and I have none to give.
I tell you frankly, sir, that I am dead.
You ne'er will reach my soul though you should strain
Through all your mortal days. Is it worth while
To buy me at such a price ? Would there not be,
In generous grace to those within your power,
More true reward in honest self-esteem
And Mercy's tenderness ?”

He made reply :

“ There is no human creature but o'erlives
An early fancy ; and in time you too
Will grow responsive to a husband's care.
These treason-proofs I hold are all my gage
That I shall win you now. I'll trust the rest.

And as for souls—'tis not with souls we live,
But flesh and blood—keep your sweet soul for
prayers !

You are the fairest woman in the realm ;
I shall be proud to have you bear my name ;
And if you lift that haughty head at Court
Beneath my coronet as you do now,
The queen herself will be out-queened in pride !

And I have waited long to be thus sure
You could not choose but be my wife at last !”
I think the scorn that settled round my mouth
Fixed then its changeless lines ; the icy glance
'Neath which he shivered, glazed fore'er my eyes !

“ Then be it so,” I cried. “ It is a bond !

You shall have flesh and blood—no more than that—
And but upon condition. Ere I wed
You shall give o'er into these very hands
All proofs and papers of this fatal web
Entangling me and mine—or else—no wife !”
He scowled, and caught his breath ; for he had
thought

To gloze with sentiment this barter o'er,
And help my vanity to self-deceit.

Then too, he fain had kept this threatening rod

To awe a victim and her trembling kin.

I only looked at him ; no shade of fear

Humbled my gaze ; the potent sway of will,
Unflinching and unsparing, ruled him then,
And ever after ; he could turn from me

No more than needle from the loadstone's spell !
"Your sword is longest," said he, "I will yield ;
You are too beautiful to render up
E'en though a plot should tear the kingdom down !"
"You understand," I answered, "'tis a bond—
For you this woman-semblance flesh and blood—
And all the outward seeming of a wife,
With buried life you never can come nigh—
For me—the freedom of my house—and you !"
It seemed he would have cursed me, were it not
For that race-courtesy that trains the tongue ;
Or broke the chain that bound him—spite of wrath,
But that he hugged the cankering coil too close !
And so he only muttered—"Tis a bond."
And when I stood before my mirror next,
I could have struck and marred my hated face
Because he deemed it fair !—but held my hand—
For ah, my love had kissed that pallid brow
And made it sacred even in my sight !—
I held my hand—we do not smite the dead !

Unseemly was the speed which hurried on
My bridal day—for safety was in haste—
And there might be just such discomfort too
As some men feel when watching in cold blood
A helpless creature slain when brought to bay.
The groom besides had formed a vague belief
That marriage would effect some magic change
Of never altered calm to passion's glow.

The wedding-bells were ringing. Two were met
Within the stately library where fell
A solemn splendor through the colored glass
On book-lined walls and white busts of the great.
I entered in in all the costly sheen
Of priceless lace and shimmer of rare stones—
The family heritage on either side—
It seemed as if the gold and crimson lights
Strove to shed warmth upon my snowy state,
And in transfigurating glory wrapped
My shining dress and coronetted head.
They spoke no words, those twain—but gazed at me
As sacrificial priests before the stroke
Must once have looked on Iphigenia bound
Upon their heathen shrine.

I stretched my hand,
And one within it laid some papers sealed
Then, spite of ringing bells and waiting guests,
And bridegroom's frowning brow, and parents' shame,
I read them one by one, and counted o'er
Each separate proof; then asked my anxious sire
If all were there down to the smallest hint;
The other's face flushed hot. But faith was kept.
Then on the burning logs I laid them all,
And smoke of them went out the chimney wide
To taint pure air vibrating with the clang
Of those loud wedding-bells—that pealed a knell!

I kept my bond—nought flesh or blood could do
Was left undone ; no wifely duty failed.

If stronger mind and vision clear controlled
His daily course, regardless of conceit
Or throes rebellious, he could not but own
He was set higher by the wit not his.

I gave his rank such grace that he was proud,
The proudest envied him. And in his home
No jarring care disturbed his idle peace.

I tended him in sickness ; stood with him
By open graves, that were some his, some mine ;
Gave him all service of the head and hand
From greatest unto simplest ; and yet ne'er
In all those years once showed or knew one trace
Of aught like feeling.

At the first he took
The outward for the real, and was content.
Slowly a wakening came on him ; too late
A something, finer, truer, stirred his soul,
When passion's mockery of Love was gone,
And Love itself disturbed with keen desire
For closer marriage than the clasping hands,
For spirit mingling, share of inner life.
Too late, too late ! His torment never pierced
Below my sight of it ; no pity e'en
For haggard suffering moved me more than might
Have softened the sereness of the dead !
It grew to be a misery that he ne'er
Could grope beneath the surface, nor come near

The buried silence of the secret depths.
And out of his strong pain there came at last
A knowledge that his anguish rose from mine ;
And tenderness sprang forth from keen remorse,
And made him other than the man he was.
What was it unto me? I kept my bond.
And when his death-time came it found him gray
And prematurely old, while I stood by
With strange-kept beauty all undimmed by age.
“Forgive me, oh, forgive me !” then, he cried,
“I knew not what I did in selfish lust
To call you mine ! Have you no word at last
To slake the thirst I die of ?” And I said ;
“The dead do not forgive—no living pain
Affects the immobility that lies
Unanswering, unchanged. The dead are dead.”
He lifted up his arms unto the heavens ;
“Is she a stone—this woman—” he exclaimed,
“Who wears a woman’s attributes ? Or worse—
A soulless thing like Sirens of old tales
That lured men to destruction ? O my God !
Give her a soul for just this parting hour
That I may have a hope for world to come !”
“One morning long ago,” I calmly spoke,
“You made a bond with me—for flesh and blood—
Have I not kept the bond ? I told you then
My soul was out of reach. I tell you now,
That in the Great Hereafter you will be
No nigher to the unapproachéd Me

Than you have ever been. Till death do part
You will have flesh and blood—no more than that.”
He groaned a groan of infinite despair,
Then in long stillness thought ; until at length,
“ My wife,” he said, “ I think somewhat there is
For me too to forgive. E’en though I die
Of hunger in the desert, I forgive,
And bless you also, since through you ’twas given
That Love should lead me from the slough of self,
And be its own reward. I sorrowed much,
But I am better that I loved you, dear,
And so can love you through Eternity,
Though resurrected feeling of your youth
Space wider than creation ‘twixt us spread !”
E’en this no closer touched me than a wind
Blown o’er a tomb ; nor any time or word
More solemn seemed than other—I was dead !

I bore his children—they were his—not mine !
I put them from me from their very birth,
Lest soft hands on my breast should wake the dead.
Nothing of me was in them—they were his—
They wore his looks—repeated o’er and o’er
Their father’s being—were so much of him
There was no room for me ; Nature itself
Conspired that nought of mine should pass to them,
Myself thus tempting self. I never took
One in my arms, and shut their voices out
From all my daily haunts. I would not give

E'en these one throb of tenderness lest life
Should upward spring, and rob of his sole right
My lost beloved.

And yet I trained them well—
Put all my brains at that—trained them so well
They never had a will or wish but mine ;
And I took clearest wisdom for a guide,
But most of all took heed—for they were girls—
They should not know their hearts ere they were
wed !

I married them to noblest in the land ;
For men were proud to take from such a hand
Such daughters for their wives. And if they loved
Their husbands I nor knew nor cared—
I had made sure they felt no love before,
Not e'en a mother's. For I kept my bond
To his as well as him,—for flesh and blood !

And now—a time has come—has come at last—
That husband—children—never could command—
When just these words upon a paper writ
Break all the tomb seals, and life struggles forth !
My love, my youth, comes back to me again !
And with my soul-sleep flit away long years
Of intermediate dreams. He comes,
He comes, my Love, who in world's worth ranks
now

Far higher than all those who scorned him once !
Ah, all his crowning honors—nay, though earth,

Whole earth itself should set him on a throne
Of universal state and sceptered power—
Could never make him more or less than that
He always was—a Man ! The Man of Men !

I do remember once my father sought
To stir the statue calm was his reproach,
By reading out the glories he had gained,
Casting his sidelong glance upon my face,
To mark if stone thus flung within my depths
Would send its circles to my changeless mien.

I fixed his shifting eye with my full gaze,
And with unshaken voice replied to him :
“ To those king-born no title can make great ;
And triumph echoes do not move the dead ! ”

But thus I knew by his own deeds he stood
Peer of the mightiest. It was nought to me
More than his cloak or sword. My love was he,
Who, nameless, landless, gave me life of life !

But oh—this sleep—this death—will it pass off
And leave me all alive as once I was
To meet him with old gladness ? O my soul
Thy quickening thrills must shake the fetters off
Of habit's coldness ! For he comes—he comes !

AFTER.

HE.

So like, and yet so changed ! Time scarce has left
A mark upon her slender, graceful form,
Or trace of all these years upon her brow !
Her very hands have kept their smooth, white youth,
And in the wavy shadows of her hair
Still lurk the golden gleams ! But that slow pace,
So different from the agile, airy step
Of her blithe girlhood—so funereal like,
Seemed as a mourner's tread that bore dead hope !
And those strange eyes, so stony cold, yet keen,
As though they gazed, without one gleam of light
Into each spirit's secret place, and took
The measure of each motive ! And that mouth—
So dimpling soft and rosy smiling once—
Great God ! what scorn, and hate, and stern resolve,
She must have known to change her mouth like that !
It was as if that moment long ago,
When her strong will uplifted her from woe
To say unfaltering, “ 'Twill be death in life
To me until we two shall meet again !”
Had fixed its power and fulfillment then
Upon her face forever ! “ Death in life !”
I did not deem that these were more than words

To emphasize her constancy ! But now—
That pallor rare—that frozen mien bespeak
A life of buried memories and dreams ;
Yet to unknowing sight would naught convey
Through stoic aspect of such still repose.
Her stately courtesy might have greeted kings ;
The polished frost of her set phrases spread
A frigid elegance o'er intercourse
That curbed emotion into self-restraint.
If she saw change in me, she made no sign ;
If she remembered aught of that fond past
She spoke no word ; if she was moved within,
No tremor of it stirred her eyes or lips.
It seemed to me before I entered in
Her presence chill, that I could never keep
My life-long yearning for her in due bounds ;
That I should all forget that she had been
A wife and mother, and at touch of hand
Must snatch her to my breast, and feel again
Old rapture of those far off days ; must fling
My pent-up tenderness in frenzied speech !
And so I strictly schooled myself to meet
All social needs—I counted up the years
So long between us full of other ties,
And set them sentries o'er my softer mood,
And masked all meaning in my guarded looks.
Alas, what mattered it ? I was as like
To clasp a marble statue in my arms,
Or breath of passion to the rigid Sphynx !

She talked to me of honors I had won,
Of countries I had seen, of books and men !
Her sentences were epigrams—her wit
Brilliant and pointed as a duel-sword.
Ah, my young love ! my innocent, fair love !
So full of joy—so buoyant—so untouched
By worldliness—if I might render up
All so-called gain—my hard-won fame and place,
Nay—very life itself, to give you back
Your happy youth, 'twould be light thing to do !
Ah, curses, curses on the evil deeds
Of plotting men that brought you to this pass !
Sure am I that if my untiring love
Could but have guarded her from every ill,
The sweetness never would have left the face
That turned to me of yore so warmly bright !
She looks like one in whom all love is killed !
Ah me ; her love for me ! her love for me !
Is that all wrecked ? How eagerly I watched
For any sign of living passion still !
For it did seem at times as outward show
Of shining coldness was but armor worn
To shield the inward ! or like glittering ice
'Neath which the surging waters ever flow !
Perchance this armor has been worn so long
The human knows not how to slough it off !
Perhaps the ice is frozen through so deep
The hidden waters never can burst through !
And yet methinks, beneath the adamant

Is burning lava yet ! For on her cheeks
Two fever spots of gradual flame arose ;
And in her hands such restlessness was shown
It seemed as though they would have wrung them-
 selves

In wild unquiet !—My Love ! my Love !—
I should have spoken out, all unappalled
By eyes and mouth ! For in her voice at last
Mingled a pathos as of coming sobs !
My Love, my Love, I think love is not dead !
And I will wait—will wait—until defence
Of armor is torn off the struggling soul !
Until the rising waters overflow !
And lava breaks through rock ! Dear Love, I wait !

SHE.

Gone, gone—and all is lost ! O, soul of mine,
Thy death-bonds are so strong they could not rend
Thy way to life again ! Oh, awful years
Of self-withdrawal from all sympathy,
Ye have so shrouded the sharp, quickening throes
With custom's calm, that Love itself is numbed
In Arctic atmosphere ! So long, so long
Have I entombed the feelings of my youth
From every presence, that e'en *his* could not
Draw them to freedom in the glare of day !—
Yet he was here !—It was not some mad dream—
His hair was white !—I think because 'twas white,

And that his head was stately as a king's
I could not leap to meet him with glad smiles
As I might once have done! For I ne'er thought
To see him other than his olden self!—
Ah me, the years, the years!—Oh, why, my soul,
Must thou lie hid as from thine enemies
Before the love that questioned from his eyes?
There is no change in that—the old, old love!—
It filled the air, and compassed me about,
Yet I shrank from it, could not brook its warmth,
Because my struggling soul had borne so long
The lonely coldness of a silent grave,
It is not pliable, thus habit-swathed
With strong repression, to spring into light
And speech and happiness, with sudden bound!—
'Tis vengeance of the Lord! If I had kept
Some sweet humanities alive in me,
Nor let relentless pride and hate so bind
Existence with indifference, till all
My buried being was so fettered in
It knew not how to burst its wonted thrall,
I might have greeted him with blissful ease
Of one translated into Paradise!—
My husband—you spoke true—something there was
For you too to forgive. I was too hard!—
And oh—my babies—my unmothered babes!
Would not the tender clinging of their arms,
The pressing of those little mouths, have reached
Through death and solitude, and made me live;

So when he came at last I might not be
What I had made myself, a willing dead !
How can I bear these yearnings that awake
With my arising soul ? O God, my God,
Have mercy, for my punishment is great !
The passion of my youth up-heaves again,
And all my youth has past ! My love has come,
Has come, and gone, and I could make no sign !
My love—for whom I died !—My love, for whom
I burst the grave sealed by my slaying will !
My love, who never guessed that he beheld
A whitèd sepulchre—of stirring life !
And he has gone—and never understood
That I have kept my parting word with him,
And met him truly but beyond the tomb !—
No mortal flesh can e'er endure these pangs !
Give me but time—a little time, my God,
Still in this world to look on him again !
The guarded stone is rolled away at last !—
The spirit free has cast its grave clothes off,
And like deep calling unto deep, cries out
Unto its only love, that nought on earth,
Save striking of the flesh by God's own hand
Shall hold it back from him ! Oh God, my God,
Stay but Thy judgment on this failing frame !—
For all the love of old was in his eyes !—
Oh, give me time !—I summon thee, my love !

HE.

At last—at last—the burning lava burst
Through prisoning rock—the waters have o'er
flowed !

But oh, my love, would I had died for thee !
Or would that I could die ! For nevermore
Will sight of her wild agony of bliss
Pass from my sorrowing sense. Ne'er again
These sad arms cease with emptiness to ache.
I went to her all quivering with hope,
And almost felt as when I was a boy
And waited for her full of tender dreams :
My heart was hot beneath my whitened head
As untrained heart of youth—Love has no age !—
She stood, up-risen from a pillow'd couch,
With hands crossed on her breast, and eyes intent
Upon the doorway ! When I entered in
She spoke no word, but such a blaze of joy
Flashed in her face, 'twas revelation's light,
And I forgot all else—the years—the pain—
And saw but my young love come back to me—
One step, and I had caught her close,—so close !—
Then on the silence broke such awful sobs
It seemed as Nature could not bear the strain ;
And I could only hold her close,—so close—

And rain my kisses on the pallid face ;
Until she lay like to a tired child
Upon my breast, and told me all her life,—
Her life!—Her death ! Her very death in life !—
Oh, then I thanked Thee, God, that I had kept
Such stainless faith to her, could listen there,
Without one tingling blush or thrill of shame,
Unto fidelity's most fearsome tale !
Then fell Time's chill on me, that there should be
Such short space left of life for one to strive
With being's whole devotion to repay
Such suffering and such love ! She lifted up
Those strange, sweet eyes to mine, and answered me :
“ Dear love—the past is but a dream—'tis gone !
'Tis but a moment in the cycles vast
That stretch before our spirits. We have all
God's great Eternity to love in yet !”
And then as if she gazed beyond this world
Into the sureness of unfading peace,
Her face grew luminous with wondrous grace ;
“ See, love,” she cried, “ the sting of death is o'er !
The grave has lost its victory ! I live !
Love-raised, love-quickened into endless life,
Thine own forevermore !”

Oh Love, my Love !

Thy last words echoed from the hidden shores
Of Immortality !

Once more we part !

Yet oft it seems to me that she is near,
As one can feel a presence in the dark !
I only wait till death dispels the gloom,
And I shall see her in the happy light
Of our Eternal Day !

Once more I wait !

THE

LION IN A MENAGERIE.



THE LION IN A MENAGERIE.

I

I turn and turn between these bolts and bars,
And up and down I pace and pace this den,
I—Lion of the Desert—in whose ken
Were once the boundless distance, countless stars !
These stifling walls, this close shut cell for me,
That roamed at will from forest unto stream,
Or 'neath the soaring palms laid down to dream
Of flying prey, imperially free !
Mine was dominion of the stretching plain,
Where, stalking lone, my roar shook trembling beasts,
And where 'mid wilderness staid royal feasts !
Ah, solitude of that old life in vain
I long and pant for that leaf shaded lair
But lioness fight won might safely share !

2

But here, here, here, these creatures' eyes do mock
My conquered strength, as circled round my cage,
They watch secure against the prisoned rage
That still can all their cowering natures shock.
For lo ! in one unchanged, defiant roar,
If I but lift resounding, threatening voice.

They couch supine with fear ; and I rejoice
 With my one gladness that forevermore
 The lion's menace quells the jackall's laugh,
 The bear's rough growl, the eagle's shrilling screech !
 Ah—ah—for one long spring their throats to reach
 With unsheathed claws, and fright-chilled blood to quaff !
 But I, like them, shall hunter's victim die
 Craft-trapped, 'neath roof, instead of open sky !

3

One blessing only does such captive know,
 That lendeth freedom's charm a welcome space,
 Prized boon of sleep—transforming state and place
 To range unchecked where wide horizon's glow.
 Once thus with couching head on outstretched paw,
 I marched from shadow of some ruins vast,
 Whose shattered pillars of a grandeur past
 The lion's shelter and the human awe ;
 And while in waking vision gazing still
 Dream-dazed o'er dazzling waste of desert-plain,
 This vivid picture flashed from brain to brain
 Electric stirring watching artist skill ;
 And slumber-chasing voice spoke comrade-joy,
 " For aye with lions fame links Delacroix ! "

4

Men deem their speech a privilege of race
 Exclusive of all knowledge save their own—

While any creature in their every tone
The meaning, and the feeling too can trace ;
Although no man has learned yet to translate
 The wordless language that within each kind
 The world of animals through nature find
Communication's fit articulate ;
And lying lazily with half-closed eyes
 I listened to the converse of these twain,
 Till, vague and dim, like mist of distant rain,
Began strange phantom memories to rise
Of antique lore, old other life intense,
With transmigration's, evolution's sense.

5

So raising thought pierced head that sudden seemed
 As weighted with gray age, I sat up straight,
 Impelled to see the secret things of Fate
That meteor-like on hapless Present gleamed ;
“Thus shalt thou sit,” said one, “beside the Seine ;
 A monumental type of lonely power,
 Twin-mated by thyself, predicting hour
Of mystic forecast, when unequaled reign
Fulfills, in Paris, Time’s prophetic law
 Of world Avator ; who, as One before
 Shall be the East, yet rule the whole West o'er !
And looking on thy face—“Our Barye saw”—

Shall sage men say : “ In lion-likeness rare
Is wisdom wierd of Orient cycles there !”

6

“ Ay,” spoke the other, “ he may come again,
The Great Napoleon, whose very name
Meant “ Lion of the Desert,” not the same
In form or feature, but the spirit strain
Unchanged from image of the lion-force !—
And as this one, bronze still as yours will be,
Outstares his prison, o'er the ruthless sea
From rock Promethean, his sight's long course
Beheld, perchance, more empire than he lost !
Mayhap was laurelled Cæsar once again,
Greek Alexander, Ghengis, Tamerlane,
Rameses towering o'er a vanquished host !
Yet now—who knows ?—may in this creature state
Here expiate the past, the future wait !”

7

“ Who knows, indeed,” was solemn answer made,
What unsolved mysteries of death in life
And life in death in every being rife
Are on immortal soul as burdens laid !
But let us thankful be, we lesser men
Than this Napoleon of your fancy's sight,

That all which was, or yet may be, in flight
Of forms and ages, is flesh hid from ken !”
And then they went their way. No lions they
To inward tumult as by tempest stirred
With ancient, modern, speculative word !
To feel the ocean-wind cast hoary spray
Of centuries across a barren height,
Yet still unquelled keep garnered lion might !

8

For at the magic titles, “ Paris,” “ Seine,”
Confused I heard a flowing river’s sound
’Mid echoes of unbroken walls around ;
Triumphant passed o’er stony ways again ;
And when “ Napoleon ” thrilled my carnal frame,
Came up through avenues all thronged with eyes
Like surge of deafening waves that rise, sink, rise,
Reverberating shoutings of that name !
Then felt my brow-weight was an iron crown !
Smelt war-red carnage ! Joined with mine the roar
On cannon-conquest spreading kingdoms o’er ;
And then—a falling horror, down and down,
Till blazed in fire on rock ’mid pathless sea
The fatal “ Waterloo ” death-charged with me !

9

For was not I that man—that destined One ?—
A moment’s clearance strange of Being’s cloud,

Mind-clutched through beast's obscure, allowed
Long trail of vision o'er career time-run—
Ah—ah—if he—why not those other Great ?—
Then gathered I all strength of sternest will
From that supremest power latent still
To catch self-hold on farther human state ;
And lo ! like mirage-wonders on the sand,
That flash with realness o'er approaching sight,
And fade deceptive in excess of light
When striving nearness finds but empty land,
Phantasmagoria of fates apart
Did o'er identitys eternal start !

10

Led lives mediæval through plottings deep
Of subtlety that guided martial gift
Where Roman phases signal echoes swift
Of "Io Cæsar," "Et tu, Brute," aye keep !—
O'er ravaged countries sweeping in the van
As fusing soul of rushing Asian hordes,
Pulsed barbarous pride unbridled power affords
In fleeting shade of conquering Tartar Khan !—
Heard through long eras phalanx triumph hails
Link battle names, "Abylos !" "Austerlitz!"
And 'twixt colossi Pharaoh faith submits
To custom hierophantic law entails ;
"Sleep, son of Ra !" a voice from Sphynx arose,
"The Temple Sleep that earthly future shows !"

II

Oh, what a dream of life's successive range
Through masks all fitted for the nature's growth,
Where rich advance and retrogressions both
Were harvesting experience from change !
Till I beheld 'neath Oriental sky
A plain immense whereon outstretching view
Knelt nations prone of every tongue and hue,
A marvellous multitude, 'mid whom on high
Sat One upon a lofty golden throne,
'Neath canopy emblazoned o'er with bees ;
And at each side like guarding destinies
The Lions of the Seine ; and on his own
Was that majestic look of wisdom hoar
Their moulded visages so weirdly bore.

12

His foot was on a lion ; o'er his head
The Roman eagle held a gem-starred crown,
Where every jewel had engraven on
A kingdom's name ; across his knees was laid
Two crossing keys upon an unsheathed sword ;
And in his hand he held a lotus-flower.
The concentration of all empire power
Was in his awful mien, when at a word

A myriad weapons flashed upon the air,
And all the host as by one vision spelled,
A city far and glorious beheld,
With world-controlling sceptre lifted there !
And then like thunders rolling on and on
To upper vastness rang “ Napoleon ! ”

13

Napoleon ! Napoleon ! that mighty shout
Swelled 'gainst a “ Paris ” written in my heart,
And woke me with a lion's wildered start
To bolts and bars and cages all about !—
No longer am I mocked with creatures' eyes ;
No more defiant roars curb petty spleen ;
For striving in me with shall be, has been,
The human with the brute commingling lies,
And sets its growing mark on massive face ;
For oft, perplexed, this Barye since has gazed
To grasp elusive something that amazed
His artist insight 'yond the modelling trace ;
Yet touch by touch wrought in his lions dumb
A prophecy of One Who Is To Come !

FRANCIS VILLON, POET

When Master Francis Villon,
Outlaw and cut-throat, thief,
For crimes abode in prison,
From death saw no relief ;
His limbs galled sore with fetters,
Shut out from light and air ;
Half killed with cruel torture,
Quite starved into despair ;
Then 'mid his only comrades,
Snakes, rats, upon the floor,
And with no other listener
Than jailor at the door ;
He sang a song of " Fortune "
To comfort his sad strait,
Forgotten in the darkness
His mortal end to wait.

Was it a toad enraptured
That croaked it in the moat ?
Or hard-voiced jailor gurgling
The lay within his throat ?
It strayed out to the sunshine
Somehow from dungeon night ;
And rhyme of Villon's Fortune
Far pulsed in air and light.

King Louis, riding proudly
In progress through the land,
Saw front of Meung's castle
Before him frowning stand ;
His Fool beside him jingled
His staff of silver bells :
“ Now read my riddles, Louis ;
Shall pearls lie lost in wells ?
Or fosse of yonder fortress,
Through Preacher of the Word,
Be changed by voice of Fortune
To cage for singing bird ?”
And on the right a courtier
Sang softly, sweet and low,
“ The Old Time Ladies' Ballad,”
And “ Where is Last Year's Snow ?”
Was tenderly re-echoed
Among the cavaliers,
Till fused with gentle sadness,
The very breeze breathed tears.
Then on the left a courtier
Took up another strain,
Of “ Old Time Lords a Ballad,”
And through the king's long train
Rang out earth's deepest question
In human-born refrain,
Soul-stirring men 'neath grandeurs,
“ Where's doughty Charlemaine ?”

While near, a wayside beggar
Loud carolled mid the trees,
“In life there is no treasure
But just to have one’s ease !”
And then from some one hidden
The words were solemn borne,
“True hearts by Christ are bounden
To succor one forlorn !”

“Methinks,” then quoth King Louis,
“The music in the air
Is all a-rhyme with Villon,
That poet *debonnaire* ;
Through all my people’s spirits,
Lord, peasant, high and low,
He here to-day is singing—
How does his ‘Fortune’ go ?”

Up then out-spoke the jester,
“Ask toad in yonder moat
Who caught its first faint numbers
From Villon’s gag-strained throat !”

Forth stepped Orleans’ stern Bishop,
(Well Villon cursed his name !)
Proclaiming to the monarch
The poet’s crimes and shame ;
“Assassin, drunkard, robber,
Companion of the vile,

Knave, gambler and despoiler,
 Adept in every wile ;
 For evil deeds unnumbered
 The court awarded death ;
 No more soon e'en in dungeon
 Will sound his tuneful breath !”

“ Ho, ho,” the jester’s mockery
 Sharp tinkled with his bell,
 “ Read, Louis, are my riddles,
 Song-pearl and castle-well !
 But good my Lord the Bishop,
 That none hear caged bird sing,
 Lock up your newts and tadpoles
 That Villon’s Fortune bring !”

For Louis murmured “ Villon,”
 And Louis wore a smile,
 And smiles were scarce with Louis
 Whose face was grave with guile ;
 “ Good Bishop,” then he answered,
 Rein marking measure slow,
 As on his right sang courtier,
 “ Ah, where is last year’s snow ?”
 “ Within this France, our Kingdom,
 Full many rogues befall ;
 At least a hundred thousand,—
 We well might hang them all !”

And up and down his fingers
Still swayed the rhythmic rein,
As on his left trolled courtier,
“Where’s doughty Charlemaine?”
“But not another poet
Like Villon could we make!
So set him free, good Bishop,
For rarest song’s sweet sake!”
Then chirped the wandering beggar
Among the rustling trees,
“Sure know I there’s no treasure
Except to have one’s ease!”
And as the king rode onward
By wind were these words borne,
“True hearts by Christ are bounden
To succor one forlorn!”

ONE OF THE COMMUNE.

Yes, I am one of them, one of the Commune,
A man of the people—a man, that is all.
Not learned in much book-lore, but born with my brains,
And a soul—or something that swells in my frame
At the thought of the many crushed down by few,
Till it seems to my sense gigantic to grow
'Gainst the wrongs of dumb peoples ; feels in its arms
The strength of blind Samson that pulled down the roof
On Philistines making their sport of his might !
One drop in the wave that leaps up like a wall, .
As in far Southern seas, scarce muttering of storm,
Then sweeps in an awful and death-bearing flood
O'er the landmarks of ages, thundering ingulfs
The churches, the forts, the carved monuments reared
To the glory of bloodshed, graved with proud names
Gained by marching red-shod o'er sacrificed lives !
But I know why I fought, I know why that wave,
An aggregate fearful of atoms obscure,
Rose up as the earth shook with menace of change
And did its dire work, and fell back to its place,
Ensanguined with dead things that floated atop !
Build dykes, O ye rich ! Set your thrones, O ye kings,
'Mid your courtiers on shore ; command back that sea !
What worth in the barriers when wind of its wrath
Stirs the leveling deep ? Did Canute sit firm

When the dark mocking ocean swept o'er his feet ?
Ah, we knew what we fought for, *we* knew who stood
Mong the wild whirling mass like clear thoughts out-
spoke

'Mid lunatic fancies of curses and song ;
For lo ! as the smoke of your cannon upcurled,
Misty hands of millions unborn waved us on,
And the sound of your guns but echoed their cry
" Fight for us, Brothers ! Make humanity free !"
And an army of ghosts pressed on us behind,
And their voice floated up through shouts of the strife.
" Avenge us ! Stand firm 'twixt the future and past !"
And we knew though we died, though iron-clad heels
Should stamp on our graves till the traces were gone,
And not e'en a dewy-leaved daisy should lift
Its tender head there in token of love,
The seed we were sowing would spring up in fruit,
Fed to ripeness by blood, our blood, which we poured
In solemn libations on altar of faith !
And when Time shall tear stinging Calumny's mask
Off faces now hid from the world's judging sight,
Ours will wear not a blush that glowed in the van
Of fierce battle To-day ! for ah ! they will shine
In eyes of To-morrow with holy ideas !—
Mere ideas, you say ;—but ideas are the wheels
That roll up the earth on her course through the heavens
Towards the Sun of Achievement ! Then when she
stands
Bright with Liberty's light, warm with Truth's rays,

She will know 'twas our work that made smooth the road !
Do we long for no more ? that fame keep our names ?
Bah ! No ; it is good to have helped this great world
To reach her grand goal ; that thought eases the tomb
We go to in darkness, defeat—not despair !
For nations look on while our last breath departs,
And the peoples, the peoples of lands far and near,
Lift listening heads as ours drop to the ground,
And link resolute hands, stand upright as men,
For they hear, O they hear, through cannon and shells,
Through Music of Triumph, our rallying cry ;
And their crown-shaking breath catches up our faint gasp
And it rings round the globe, "Vive, vive La Commune!"
And when like that shape on yon trophy o'erthrown,
Your Bonapartes, Bourbons, lie broken in dust,
'Gainst clear sky of Justice one figure shall stand
Sublime through the ages ; a grey-headed man
With breast bared to bullets. True brothers to come,
That barricade pedestal mounted by him
Is *your* Column Vendôme !

My turn, did you say ?

'Tis well ; I am ready. What terror has death
For us who have seen our Delescluze dic ?
Have I any last words for loved one or friend ?
You're kinder, my soldier, than most of your caste.
No need to speak low, or to bend down your head ;
My last words are for you, for France, for the world,
And I say them out loud—"Vive, vive La Commune!"

BAJAZET.

Aloft upon a grassy hill
There sat a shepherd swain,
And played upon his rustic pipe
A simple, plaintive strain ;
His heart was in the music sweet,
He looked nor here, nor there,
As through the sunny stillness stole
The tones of tender air.

His feeding flock around him made
The slopes of verdure white
Amid the calm of brooding peace
In noontide's golden light ;
As swelled from happy innocence
The gentle roundelay
In melody of inner world
That sped the lonesome day.

Below o'er the echoing, startled plain
Surged sudden the pomp of martial train ;
An army that marched in strife's array,
With glitter of splendor on vengeful way ;
For fury raged high o'er stifled grief
In haughty resolve of royal chief,

Since out from the depths of steppes vast
The Tartar had rushed to fair Sebaste

With hordes that had razed its towers down,
 And changed into desert dearest town,
 With all of its people scattered, slain,
 By sword of unsparing Tamerlane.

The Sultan's own son, beloved and brave,
 Met doom of the captured in bloody grave ;
 And forth in a storm of hate and woe
 The monarch swift whirled to face his foe ;
 When tempest of host for battle ripe
 Was thrilled through by strains of peaceful pipe.

They touched his full heart 'neath shield of wrath,
 And cast sorrow's prescience o'er his path ;
 "Ah, Swain," cried he, "let thy burden be
 Unhappy Bajazet, never to see
 Again thy bright days of pleasure past,
 Thy son, or thy city, fair Sébaste !"

Then on to his fate the Sultan swept,
 And quiet once more o'er hillside crept ;
 But victor another victor found ;
 And loaded with chains, like wild beast bound,
 He crouched in his cage 'mid conqueror's train,
 Bereft of life's all by fierce Tamerlane.

And oft when the Tartar watched him there,
 Saw stony eyes set in hapless stare
 As brooding o'er power forever fled,

And deemed that he dreamed of glory dead,
Bajazet but listened in soul again
To music of simple shepherd swain.

For still upon the grassy hill
His pipe the shepherd played ;
No stir among the feeding flock
An empire's fall betrayed ;
Yet 'mid the artless, wistful notes
Of guileless rustic strain
A something deeper earnest flowed—
A chord of human pain.

THE LARK'S SONG.

"No larks live in this land ;"
From early childhood I had heard it said ;
 Yet ever longed to hear
A soaring lark's voice from a high cloud shed.

Oft watching in the fields,
I looked for lonely nest upon the ground,
 From which two fluttering wings
Should upward float on rising waves of sound.

On crumb-spread window-sill
I heard the welcome robins whistling clear,
 And Summer in their notes
Stirred Spring to start from breast of Winter drear.

And in the arbor vines
The tender, tiny wren's low chirping filled
 Their leafy screen, and flowed
Into the sun like rhythmic rain-drops spilled.

The unseen thrush's strain
Shook like a holy thing the hawthorn hedge,
 That, as the burning bush
From which God spake, glowed at the meadow's edge.

And mid the mellow calm
Of that still hour when day and evening meet,

All Nature's chorussed voice
A many-throated mocking-bird sang sweet.

Each brought to heart and brain
A subtle something never caught by word ;
A widening of vague love ;
Yet still I said, "The Lark's voice is not heard !"

Across the seas at last,
I listened to the nightingale at night
Half-swooning in the flood
Of plaintiff melody thrilled with delight,

That woke the buried dead
Of youth and hopes and happy dreams of yore,
Till all my spirit's chords
Were tuned with memory's music of "no more."

"The nightingale," I said,
"Sings sweetest with her breast against a thorn,
And sad her gladdest song ;
But of pure joy the Lark's light lay is born !"

Once from a golden field
Of waving wheat I saw a speck upstart
Mid breathless harmony
That shook the air like beats of music's heart.

Higher and higher still,
Farther and farther flowed the fluent sound,
Until like morning light,
It spread and filled the broad horizon's bound.

Then from a snowy cloud
Shaped as an angel leaning from the blue,
And luminous, as if
Heaven's glory shone in rift it wandered through,

There poured such wondrous tone
Such pure triumphant resonance of glee,
As if the seraph sung
Some blissful strain of hallowed symphony ;

Then sudden ceased, and left
A palpitating silence on the sky,
And all the welkin throbbed
With rippling pulses of dumb ecstasy.

We knew ourselves again,
Saw quivers running through the yellow wheat,
Heard leaves of listening trees
Through rapturous quiet rustling sighs repeat,

And watched the changing cloud
Pass out of sight, grown strange, and still, and dark,
While life had gained and lost ;
And some one softly said, "It was the Lark!"

The Lark ! and yet the Lark,
This incarnation of the voice divine,
But filled my yearning dreams
With lovely hints, as grapes may give of wine,

Of something still beyond,
Some marvelous music of immortal birth,
That, having heard the Lark,
I wait for, knowing 'twill not be of earth !

AN OLD TIME SINGER.

Ah, my mind looks back at thee,
Poet of an older day,
Whose choice, dainty madrigals
Love's own heart will thrill alway.

Goodly wert thou in brave dress,
Booted, and with sword at side,
Laces rich at breast and wrist
Tasselled collar fine and wide,

Velvet coat of gayest hue,
Kerchief fit for modish dame—
Thus all blades of thine own time
Were bedight this gorgeous same.

On thy shoulders careless fell
Heavy wealth of curling hair,
And thine attitude was grace,
Easy, simple, debonnaire.

While thine eyes half-merry, sad,
Looked on wine when it was red,
As thy jest o'er flowing bowl
Lustre on its sparkle shed ;

Or thy mellow, virile voice
Rang out measures clear and strong,

Stirring echoes tender, true,
'Neath all lightness lingering long.

Naught of these placed thee apart—
Many men have revelled, sung,
Other countless cavaliers
In such wise their lives have flung ;—

But around thee, poet born,
Was there no felt atmosphere
That to comrades marked thee lone,
Higher set thee than their cheer ?

Was there sense in dimmer minds
Linked in common mortal race,
With thee sharing wit and wine,
Of a nobler, finer grace ?

Inner being, outward man—
Ah, what difference in show—
Gentle gallant, poet rare,
Could they both in one guise know ?

But those years, and thou, art gone—
Yet these lyric words of thine
Vision of thy presence brings
Vanished from the world long syne ;

And the soul was really thee
Over centuries can reach
Touching ours to kinship sweet
By song's subtle spirit speech.

A SONG AT THE FEAST.

The feast was rich, the table gleamed
With cates and dainties rare
And flowers wreathing all about
Rainbowed the fragrant air ;

While crystal flagons sparkling flashed
With golden, ruddy wine,
Like amber, ruby gems that held
Imprisoned pure sunshine ;

The guests were gay, the laughter light ;
Well knew the happy host
With blithesome ease and witty grace
To draw forth jest and toast ;

And sweetest music flowing soft
Pulsed through the pause of speech,
Scarce noticed, yet to issues fine
Heart-touching mirth in each ;

Then, as convivial, wild strain
Was changed to higher mood,
The wary host a singer called
Who in the background stood ;

“A song,” he cried, “to float our souls
Our lower selves above !

We drink to Bacchus, god of wine,
To Venus, sing, of Love!"

Then mellow, tender, through the hall
Swelled luscious, melting tone,
So stirring with the thrills of Love
All memories felt their own.

Yet some strange pathos in the voice
Through this chord deeper smote
Upon the secret silences
Made each from each remote.

One in his brimming goblet gazed
As though to keep down tears ;
One stared upon the empty wall
As if it visioned fears.

But none looked in another's face
To see the wine flush fade,
And hands that grasped the bubbling cup
In stillness by it stayed,

Till sudden ceased the spelling notes,
When all their beakers drained
To stifle back the rising sigh
Of Nature overstrained ;

But none unto the other said,
With free returning breath,
That though the song had told of Love,
It brought the thought of Death.

ART.

I

All Art is joy—conception is the glow
 Of pure creative bliss when fancy draws
 From chaotic depths by form—evolving laws
 Ideal fashioned to existing show ;
 And when the finished work is all the earth's,
 A part of being as a hill or tree,
 None marvel more at 'wondering mystery
 Of Spirit moulds projecting mundane births,
 Than sculptor who beholds his statue breathe
 Clear human from the marble's senseless white,
 Or painter, as his picture yields to sight
 The latent meaning Nature's scenes enwreathe,
 Or Poet, when elusive suited word
 Has grasped the subtle thought, a scripture heard.

2

But deem not ye who stand with reverent hearts
 Before the glories genius has wrought,
 That high achievement to true artist brought
 Uplifting pride that from self-sources starts.
 Nay—only for the while it was undone
 The thing of beauty was his very own ;
 Once forth from him 'tis his no more alone,

Owned by all Love, inspired worth world won,
Transcending consciousness by grace that came
From his ebb'd mortal limits, whilom swayed
By power which humbles in its witness made
For immortality that consumes his fame,
Soul-grateful that a chosen life-breath he
Of Master-Maker for the "Let there be."

3

To One whom Nature has begot for Art,
Though thorns bestrew his dark and weary road,
Though bends his life 'neath pains' unsparing load,
Though fame's success cheers not his straining heart,
If some rare tempting chance should offer make
To give for genius in vast exchange
All gainful gifts that in earth's values range,
Wealth, power, love, his soul could ne'er forsake
The God within him. Though the waiting cross
Through anguish of Gethsemane should loom,
Hosannas still should lead him to his doom,
These other treasures counting only dross—
"Art crowns," he cries, "Art is exhaustless mine!
Art is pure Love for beauty's truth divine!"

A LEGEND OF THE TALMUD.

King David, the singer, Nature's bard
Sang to his harp at the close of day
A stirring song, and the poets' fire
Burned and glowed in the wonderful lay.

His soul was thrilled by his own sweet notes,
Borne on them still as on sweeping wing ;
But human thought may not soar too high—
Pride filled the heart of the holy king.

And down from the starry vault of heaven,
Out of effulgence of unseen throne,
Away from voices of seraph hosts,
Dropped dreams of glory up on his own.

"Among all thy creatures, Lord," he cried,
"Dwelling beyond or beneath the sky,
Hast one who utters in praise to Thee
Such grand, melodious psalms as I?"

No answer came on the evening breeze,
Strange stillness seized on the rippling air ;
Through open window a locust flew
To his mantle's hem and settled there.

Its tones rang clear through the silent room,
Mates joined it as an echoing choir ;
A nightingale's sudden music shook
Shadows with sound like a hidden lyre.

The ear of the King was opened then ;
Uprose a myriad changing strains ;
All Nature's harmonies mingling swelled
Ecstatic rythms of glad refrains.

He heard the tinklings of many brooks,
Rustlings of woods, and pulsings of life,
The varied range of the wind's great chords,
And roll of the sea with mystery rise ;

And symphonies of shining spheres,
Stars that sung in their measureless height,
And paens of white-robed angel bands
Throbbing through courts of celestial light.

Then wisdom entered the minstrel's mind ;
Hearing yet the locust's chirping tone,
His humbled spirit repentant deemed
That the insects' song excelled his own.

He owned the lesson divinely taught ;
Over his harp bowed his head and heart ;
In ceaseless and universal hymn
Taking lowly then his simple part ;

All creatures of His, praise ye the Lord !
Praise Him in all His marvellous ways !
Thou, likewise, oh my innermost soul,
Humbly join in thy Maker's praise !

PRAYING.

In temple of myself I pray my prayer,
And let it lie
Like planted seed to bear me precious fruit
Of due reply.

Not as I wish, perhaps, will be fulfilled
My urgent need,
And not in pathways where I fain would tread
Will God's hand lead.

Yet somewhere out of darkness I shall turn
Into the Light,
And after groping through the dim obscure
Rejoice in sight ;

And looking back upon the troubled course
Thorny and long,
Where oft my weary soul with struggling faint
Beheld but wrong,

At last in calmness of a great peace won
Shall clearly see
Where blood-stained foot-prints mark the onward steps
Towards sweet To Be ;

And all the wounds, the pain, the blinding tears,
As jewels shine,

While groanings in the night like echoes swell
Of strain divine !

For some day I may feel God's way is best
Howe'er I go ;

And though His word be hard to understand
I yet shall know !

And so although amid my strife I pray,
'Tis not because

I hope to 'scape the dealings of His grace,
Or change His laws ;

But 'tis that when all mortal joys seem far,
And earth is drear,

My soul in yearning soars beyond the flesh,
And feels Him near ;

And having only human words to speak
In limits bound,

I utter cries for help, while spirit depths
Find no true sound;

For Wisdom's Infinite and Present Love
Brood o'er my fate ;

So lying low upon His sheltering arm
I learn to wait !

TWO.

Together, each day by day,

In all the show of life ;

Together before the world

A wedded man and wife ;

Together in duty, in wealth, in name,

Together in outside weal and shame ;

Linked by the church and fettered by fate,

Together for all their earthly state !

Far apart as star from star,

As frozen pole from pole ;

Far apart in tastes and hopes,

In sympathy of soul !

Far, far apart in all inward needs,

Far, far apart in dreams and deeds ;

Far, far apart when seeming anear,

And farthest apart e'en when most dear !

One by the fiat of oath,

Two by God's awful will ;

One by the strong marriage tie,

Yet two by Nature still !

One to suffer, to chafe, and to wait !

Two in their spirits never to mate !

One by the voice and law of men !

Two that death will sunder in twain !

AD ALTIORA.

" Oh, tirra lirra !" sang a youth,
While " tra la !" warbled maiden,
And " Buzz, buzz," breathed the busy bee
With Summer honey laden ;
When o'er them burst a carol clear
Of small bird homeward winging ;
Youth, maid, and even busy bee
Paused all to list his singing.

Sweet thrilling through the sunny air,
The music seemed aspiring
To mingle with angelic songs
And woke a vague desiring ;
" Oh, world beyond !" exclaimed the youth ;
" Oh, happy nest !" sighed maiden ;
" Oh, ecstacy of idle joy !"
Buzzed bee with treasure laden.

GLORY VERSUS LABOR.

Venus, to Vulcan wedded, looks on Mars,
And quite forgets her duty to her lord,
Who, grimed with dust, at his black anvil works,
While the proud war-god sheathes his glittering sword,
And clad in panoply of mailed array,
With victor laurels round his helmet twined,
Lingers at Beauty's side, nor heeds the din
Of bloody fields borne on the warning wind ;
In idle chariot his battle-steeds,
Terror and Flight, await his guiding skill,
While the fair goddess, dazzled, tender, kind,
The hero holds a willing captive still !
Thus martial show from homely Toil wins Love,
Though Vulcan forges thunderbolts for Jove !

DIANA OF POICTIERS.

“ The conqueror of him who conquers all !”
So graved the Lyonnaise in loving leal
Upon Diana’s medal ; and the king
In his own slavery only pride could feel
When gazing on the witching face that won
Admiring tribute of a peoples’ zeal ;
For love ruled him indeed who ruled the land ;
And years no lustre from her grace could steal
Whom poets praised, and at whose worshipped feet
Where bowed a crown, the world was glad to kneel
In coronation of a throneless queen !
But ah ! how Time with love and lives doth deal !
He conquered all ! She conquered him ! What now
Is Henry’s passion, Poictiers’ peerless brow ?

PATIENCE.

An English poet of the olden days
Wrote " Patience is the soul of peace," and I,
Almost three centuries apart from him
And fretted sad with cares, glanced careless eye
Over the page, and caught this wisdom's word,
That, as a ripple striking on the shore
Made by a stone chance-thrown on Times' deep wave,
Touched my great need, and freshened life once more.
'Twas like a staff put in a blind man's hand
To lead through tortuous ways to pastures still ;
Or seed, that taking root in battle soil,
Springs up, with grain the blood-stained field to fill !
Oh, human poet-soul ! dost thou now know
How far, how long, inspired echoes go ?

BARYE.

With clearest thought, keen sight, and pliant hands
He caught the meaning of those lower lives
Where Being ever onward, upward strives
Till in the human it transcendent stands.
The grace and beauty of their strength he saw,
Thrilled at the pathos of their limits straight,
And found within their dumb, unhonored state
The mighty impress of impelling Law.
World-welcome to old Truth made new is aye
The cross or fagot, e'en though borne unseen ;
But unto this rare soul must power have been,
Mid lone despite of Fame, joy ever high,
Since in himself through Genius he could know
Life-range from creature sense unto creating glow !



IN LANDS APART.

OFF THE IRISH COAST.

Land, land at last ! White sea-gulls poised
Upon their outspread wings,
Whose floating grace to weary ships
Sweet shoreward tidings brings,
Swift dip upon the crested waves
Their orange feet in foam,
And with faint cries give welcome glad
To spirits nearing home.

Through veiling mists the shadowy hills
Loom cloud-like o'er the sea ;
We speed ; the barren headlands brown
Slope sunlit on the lee !
On, on, and on ; the longing heart
An added witchery yields,
For like a draught to those athirst,
There shine the soft green fields !

Then dancing on the sparkling deep,
Frail skiffs speed from the shores,
And sentinel on threatening rock
The lonely lighthouse soars !
On, on and on ! The harbor won,
The anchor drops at last !
Safe in the haven of the land,
The ocean dream is past !

IN THE COLISEUM.

Go stand within the Coliseum walls,
And 'mid the sunny stillness call again
The Roman multitudes of other days
Back to their cruel lives athirst for blood,
And place them there in all their ancient state,
Row upon row of fierce expectant eyes,
A palpitating mass of eager zest ;
Behold the Emperor in his purple robes,
Who deemed himself a god, set in their midst ;
And in the wide arena, war-worn men
Grouped, sword in hand, to fight unto the death ;
Then, in that moment's quiet, when the hush
Of breathless listening quells the restless crowd,
That moment's calm, when those about to die
Salute the Cæsar, think, if in such time
Once long ago there could have sudden flashed
On that great audience a vision clear
Of what their amphitheatre is now,
A silent ruin overgrown with weeds,
One keen and instant sense of mortal fate,
The transientness of building, empire, man, .
Would not an awful solemn stillness then
Have stolen o'er them such as reigns within
The shattered Circus of their sports to-day ?
And moving slowly, softly, one by one,

Would they have gone out, fear-struck to their souls ?
Or would the whole assembly, smote at once
With this same realizing, madly rise
In all their lusty health, and with one shout
Of terror-clinched conviction echo there
The Gladiator's words, "About to die—
Oh, Cæsar, we salute thee—we—who die !"

THE GOTHIC KINGS.

FOUR STATUES ON THE PINCIAN HILL, ROME.

Ancient captives we,
 Bound eternally ;
 With weary hands enchain'd,
 And faces bowed and pained,
 While eras dawned and waned
 We thus have watched the mightiness of Rome !

Never to be free !
 Wither could we flee
 To reach some blessed land
 Unheld by conquering band,
 Ungrasped by outstretched hand
 Of an insatiate and world-possessing Rome !

Images of stone,
 Mournful and alone,
 Amid the bright To-Day,
 Signs of things past away,
 We symbolize the sway
 Of unrelenting and resistless olden Rome !

Types of something more :
 In those days of yore

Some subtly thinking Greek
Beholding strength grow weak,
Made deathless marble speak
Of Freedom's yearning strife against enslaving Rome !

For as sculptor wrought
Farther reaching thought
Saw happy coming hour
When e'en earth's conquering power
No more could darkly lower ;
For death the prisoners freed e'en of law-girt Rome !

Musing o'er the clay,
"Lo," he said, "alway,
O Captives, ye shall stand
Personifying band,
In emblematic land,
Of bondage wider than the thralldom of great Rome !

"Types of awful Fate,
Common human state,
Whose chains of circumstance
Forbid the soul's advance
Towards fetterless expanse
Of liberty beyond our stern condition's Rome !

"Endless spirit-strife
Throughout mortal life

Of effort to prevail
'Gainst destiny's entail
Of being finite, frail,
Controlled and crushed by an inexorable Rome !

"As the ages roll
From man's unseen soul
Shall evermore arise
The secret anguish cries
Of doubt that never dies,
Humanity's protest against ordaining Rome !

"Questioning of death
'If with end of breath
The bonds of time and place,
Of Nature and of race,
Of heritage's trace
Shall fall forever off from slaves of this earth's Rome?"

Thousands come and go
Our sad gaze below,
But few the seeing eyes
That in our captive guise
Know hidden meaning lies
Of Fate-environed life midst universal Rome !

AT THE BALL AT LONG BRANCH.

Wildly swells the witching music,
Throbbing through the summer night
Rising, falling, fevering, maddening,
Mid the perfumed warmth and light ;
Waltz delirious, delicious,
Crashing, flowing soft as sigh,
Stirring, whirling human pulses
In voluptuous harmony.

Still forever mid the pauses
Of the gay dance measure's sound,
Sweeps there up a hollow moaning
As for something never found ;
Beating through the ravished senses,
With its solemn monotone,
Till the spirit that is in us
Stands among the throng alone.

Rolls and rolls its heavy echo
Through the thrills of vague desire,
Till to dreamy yearning changes
All the glow of mounting fire ;
Till the show as shadowy glitter,
Dims upon the vacant sight ;
Only phantoms float around us,
And a mist comes o'er the light ;

And a feeling of the far-off
Fills the separate, saddened soul,
An outstretching towards the shoreless,
Surging with the ocean's roll ;
For as sounds through trancing music
The deep voice of boundless sea,
Dwells amid life's finite falseness
Awful, true eternity.

NIAGARA.

NIAGARA : A PSALM.

It makes of the whole earth a temple,
Is the altar and Holy Place there ;
God's presence broods over its waters,
Wings of cherubim gleam through its veil ;
The Word from the Voice of Almighty
Midst the tumult of motion is heard ;
The Lord reigns in glory forever
On its grandeur by day and by night !

For cycles the wilderness trembled
As the white foaming torrents swept through ;
For ages the solitudes listened
To the thunderous leap o'er the brink ;
For eras uncounted wild surges
Sprang sunlit in snowy spray-founts ;
The awful floods swirled into whirlpools ;
Long ere Nature knew Man in the world !

But stars in their courses looked downward,
Sun and moon shed their silver and gold,
The bow spanned the space with its brightness,
And the wind-wreathing waves hurried on ;

Still Power majestic, resistless,
And the desperate impulse of Force
Kept then 'mid the tumult and terror
The same calm underlying as now !

For lo ! from the Lord God Jehovah
Had gone forth the great word to the deeps.
" Thus far thou shalt go, and no farther !"'

They praise Him in their limits and might !
And angels came down from the heavens
Ere humanity chorussed their hymn,
In the shrine of these floods overfalling
To adore 'mid the incense of mist !

What bliss in the sense of creation,
And what joy must Omnipotence know
To bring forth from chaos such beauty,
To conceive out of nothingness, this !

In ecstasy silent of worship
We reflect but the exquisite thrill
Of earth at this birth from her bosom
When the Maker beheld " it was good !"

The tranquil wide river in ripples
Flows in peace on its long quiet way,
Then swift into fierce currents rushing
Plunges over the precipice steep ;

With strength, and with grace, and with glory
Falls and dies in the troubled abyss ;

Dies :—then like a spirit ascending
In sun-illumed mist soars above !

The soul of man bows down before thee,

O Niagara, for upon thee

He gains of the Infinite glimpses,

And beholds the Eternities rest !

Amid all his fear and his wonder,

Lifts his heart in unspeakable praise,

For even in turbulence headlong

There is hidden invincible Law !

Lord God of the cataracts, rapids,

O Lord God of the fountains and spray !

Thy presence is over the waters !

And Thy will guides the waves on their way !

NIAGARA: THE LEGEND.

The awe in the heart of the red men
As they gazed on the heights and the depths
As they looked on the falling waters,
On the solemn mists purple and gold,
Awakened the yearning to render
Some rare tribute, some treasure of love,
As sacrifice laid on an altar
Of the spirit who dwells in the flood !

They gave of their purest and dearest,
The young maiden most fair of the tribes ;
They heaped the white boat with bright flowers,
And in worship knelt down on the shores
As singing her death song of triumph
She swept out o'er the terrible cliff,—
Then luminous spray and the rainbows
In the secret place folded her in !

For years Niagara's requiem
Swelled anew o'er this offering of grace ;
It troubled the heart of the waters
With the weight of a gift unreturned.
The land brought its best and its sweetest,
As proud subjects press gems on a king ;
What royal bestowal befitting
Should the current yield back to the land ?

It nourished and ripened a nature
Upon lofty thoughts breathed by its foam,
Baptized with the strength of its splendor
A soul that it reared to its height ;
And when in the time of her trial
The sad country was groaning with pain,
Niagara gave her a hero
The great waters had made for the land !

NIAGARA: A MEMORY.*

War's tocsin had sounded and echoed—
There were terror, and triumph, and tears !
The North had collected her legions—
Fields were wet with an awful red dew !
Then come up the men of his region,
“Lead us forth ! we will follow till death !”—
Ah ! home and the sweet wife were precious !—
“We will march under no other chief !”

Through cry of the men of his region
Rose the fateful deep sound of the Falls !—
From love and from peace and from household
He went out to the turmoil of blood ;
Went out where the duty was strongest,
With the heat of the cause in his heart ;
Went out to the peril and patience
Of Mortality waiting on Fame !

At last came the doom and the moment
When the starry Flag drooped on its staff ;
When bravest sank back from the slaughter,
From the fiery hell of the strife !

* Of Colonel Porter, who was killed in the early part of the Civil War while leading a forlorn hope.

No hope for the gallantest venture,
And no chance save for honor and death !—
Then heading the host of Niagara
Set the chieftain his front to the foe !

Nor faltered the men of his region—
Could they shrink from the leader they chose ?—
They followed with destiny loyal
Gazing straight in Eternity's gulf !
For power resistless compelled them
In firm tread that marched on to the end ;
As over the face of their chieftain
Shone the light of a strange, solemn smile !

Light borne from the far-away waters,
Of the calm underlying the rush !—
He thought of the tranquil bright river
In untroubled course sweeping along,
Then dashed into whirlpools and tumults
Until making one terrible leap
It plunged o'er the precipice fearful,
And died down in the foaming abyss !

He smiled then with a memory tender,
For before him arose from the depths,
Like spirit ascending to heaven,
The illumined ethereal spray !
They looked, the brave men of his region,
On that smile as they marched unto death,

And thought of Niagara's grandeur
 And the bow on the sunlighted mist !

Lord God of the whirlwind and torrent !
 O Lord God of the battle and strife !

Thou upliftest Thy waters to heaven,
 And Thou callest Thy martyrs to Thee !

THE BAHAMAS.

Over the trackless, distant waste
Columbus gravely, slowly sailed ;
Heart-lone, time-worn, on tardy ship
His sleepless eyes the bright land hailed ;
What echo keeps that sounding sea
Still rolling to the island shore
Of glad Te Deum 'neath the cross
That claimed the New World won of yore ?

Haughty and brave, from far-off Spain,
By fancy steered to sunny coast
To seek 'mid palms sweet Fount of Youth,
Famed Ponce de Leon led his host ;
Never a trace holds tinted waves
Sparkling beyond the island shore
Of gallant dreamer's ardent quest
So long ago death-gained and o'er.

Her worthies sturdy England sent
To seize her share of storied land,
Queen-sped from whitened cliffs to seas
That purpled to the golden sand ;
What signs of Raleigh's brilliant aim
Are wafted to the island shore ?
Of Drake's adventures on the foam
That cresting shines, then is no more ?

Black as their lives the Pirate's flag
Darkened the limpid, azure deep,
Dread harbinger of blood-stained greed
Fierce as the hurricane's wild sweep ;
What shadow marks the gentle swell
That softly curves on island shore
Of lawless passion, evil deeds,
Or gales that sank with ebbing roar ?

Out of beleaguered, war-closed ports
Defiant vessels slipped away,
And fleet with fear on ocean free,
Secure in Southern waters lay ;
What murmurs of a nation's strife
Now ripple to the island shore ?
What thunders of old battles crash
On billowy calm of storm-wrath o'er ?

Now peaceful barks of commerce ride
From many lands in harbor still ;
And to and fro the white sails glide
That balmy breezes safely fill ;
But when To-Morrow's tide has swept
The Future to the island shore,
What of To-Day shall seaward bide
More than the Past has graved before ?

The sea rolls on the same, the same,
Majestic, solemn, lone and great ;

Ages and Ages still it rolls
Unchanged, untouched by human fate !
But as his memories engulphed
By waves around the island shore,
Man, o'er Eternity's vast space
Must pass, like ships forgot of yore !

THE OUTLOOK.

The ships are anchored in the bay
The weary ships with haven won ;
Encompassed by the purple waves
Beneath the brilliant Tropic sun ;
At last upon the Summer sea,
Untossed, at rest, they quiet lie ;
In idle ease, scarce darkened o'er
By fleecy clouds in azure sky.

Far off upon th' horizon's verge
A white-sailed sloop speeds swift from sight,
Like some glad bird whose outspread wings
Cleave straight into the realms of light ;
It leaves behind the fair green isle,
The waters sparkling on the reef,
To seek a shore, o'er ocean gray,
Where winter withers bud and leaf.

Like those moored vessels worn with storms,
Now sheltered safe in harbor calm,
We too repose through glowing days
Beneath the shadow of the palm ;
But ah ! our thoughts are like the bark
That sweeps across the rounding main ;
Love wafted from bright, softer clime,
To our own land of cold and rain.

THE LILIES OF PROSPERITY.*

White shining in the tropic sun,
Uplifting from the clustered green
The snowy, slender leaves that bear
Their gold-rayed chalices atween—
Oh, Earth, in all thy places choice
Dost thou, in beauty's verity,
Hold grace and pureness sweeter than
The Lilies of Prosperity ?

Long brightening o'er the weedy wilds
Of lone, forsaken garden beds
From still, deserted house behind
They swayed their tender, stainless heads,
For whispering winds the sadness breathed
Of change as human verity
'Twixt perfect hills and palm-fringed sea
To Lilies of Prosperity !

Of yore adown those lofty steps,
And round about those bordered ways,
Fair vanished women musing walked
'Mid flower stars of other days—

* "Prosperity" is the name of an estate in St. Croix, Danish West Indies.

White clad were they in Sumner land ?
 White souled in gentle verity,
 Thine island sisters of the Past,
 Oh, Lilies of Prosperity ?

Now pearly cups yield greeting too
 For stranger on your sunny shore,
 Like finger-touches petals light
 Thrill 'gainst a woman's robe once more !
 And 'neath the Southern sunset sky,
 Celestial colors' verity,
 Soft pleading melodies arise
 From Lilies of Prosperity !

" Ah, life within the empty home,
 And speech amid the silences,
 Love-thoughts among the solitudes,
 A welcome presence brings to bless ;
 Then here in soothing Lethe airs,
 Where peace is world-sought verity,
 In calm of quiet hours stay
 With Lilies of Prosperity ! "

Oh, Lilies, Lilies, fair to see,
 Or soon, or late, is death-chance sure,
 And o'er wide seas the winged ships go,
 What mortal state shall e'er endure ?
 But grave or wave for living heart,
 In Nature's steadfast verity,
 'Mid fadeless green will still bloom on
 The Lilies of Prosperity.

A TROPIC NOON.

Were I a child-eyed Greek of Time yet young
Out-gazing on this shining sea and sky,
Where sheet of diamond sparkles flashing lie
By dazzling arch of lustrous deeps o'erhung,
I should behold the vision poets sung,
Not needing fancy sight to verify,
Of goddess floating there to glorify
Still more the splendors noon around her flung—
And as her rosy shell should bear her o'er
Effulgent swell, the thrilled, ecstatic air,
Engoldened with the sheen of flowing hair
Light-veiling gleams of star-white shape from shore,
Should to adoring soul breathe truth unworn
That Venus from the sky and sea was born !

A TROPIC SUNSET.

Majestic sinks day's globe of blinding fire
Behind the dark horizon line of sea,
Whose azure circling sweeping vast and free
Upholds the cloud-chain that like hills aspire
Between its blue and separate far sapphire
Still solemn in the golden radiancy,
Till blending tints, like rainbow paling, flee,
As upward stream from flame of dying pyre,
Mist-white and spectral, lengthening, fan-spread rays
To arching deeps of peace, where pallid fades,
'Mid melting violets' most tender shades,
A phantom spheric moon in waning grays
Beneath the silvery crescent-hung below
The one, first star of amber Afterglow.

"PAN SLEEPS."

GOETHE'S REMARK TO ECKERMAN IN A GARDEN AT SUNSET.

SCENE : WEST INDIES.

In moveless silence broods the air
 Dream-seethed in amber afterglow ;
The sculptured shadows of still clouds
 Lie dusk on heaveless sea below ;
Naught stirs between abysmal deeps ;
 Pan sleeps.

The waving fields whose purple plumes
 The winds have fluttered through the day,
Are spelled into a breathless calm,
 That, after tossing, breezy play,
Each fringe of upright feather steepes ;
 Pan sleeps.

The mist-white rays slant broadening up
 From far horizon sunset dyed
'Gainst sky of violet lost in blue
 Where color in its temple wide
The sacredness of stillness keeps ;
 Pan sleeps.

The quiet of the graceful slopes
 Has settled to a holy hush

"Pan Sleeps."

Where on their greenness rosy rests
The glory of a lingering flush
As light's last wing-poise downward sweeps ;
Pan sleeps.

Day's throbings cease in pause serene ;
World's fever-thrills no more excite ;
Life-sense is in abeyance held ;
On threshold of approaching night
Where darkness all their fruitage reaps ;
Pan sleeps.

The god-horned brow has touched the ground ;
Through victory's shell no loud voice blows ;
Catch pointed ears no outer sound ;
From hand-dropped reed no music flows ;
The satyr-hoof no longer leaps ;
Pan sleeps.

Soul, havened in Time's solitude,
Enwrapt in Memory's afterglow,
Glad be in wisdom's lingering light
That 'neath the peace when day is low
Which all thy waiting being steeps,
Pan sleeps.

FLOWERS
OF
A TROPIC ISLAND.



I

SNOWDROPS.

What time the violets in Northern fields
'Mid screening grass send tell-tale fragrance up,
And gemmed with dew the golden crocus cup
Sways in the showery breeze that quickening yields
E'en to the tender green of shadowy wealds
That mong the frost-brown moss of bosky nooks,
By rippling music of clear, sunless brooks,
The trailing beauty of Arbutus shields ;
In emerald islands of the Southern Sea
The fragile snowdrop lifts its stainless flower
In lambent radiance of noon tide hour,
By wind-swept roadsides and on open lea ;
And made akin in decking dawning Spring
All Nature's blooms her subtle yearnings bring.

OLEANDERS.

Choice, stately blossom of all Southern climes,
That sweetens sunny air with spicy scent
From grouped coronas of rich blushes blent,
Here thou art companioned with yellow limes,
And all the affluence of fruitage times,
The granadilla's gold, the branches bent
With orange ripeness, the pomegranates rent
By ruddy pulp, 'mid breeze-stirred, leafy chimes ;
Yet thou dost brighten too dry, dusty ways
Of storied Italy, and in lone piles
Of silent ruins, through their saddening grays
Thy roseate grace crowns fallen peristyles,
As blithesome on the grave of ancient Rome
As 'mid the fecund life of island home.

3

FRANGIPANI.

All leafless in the stripping winter wind
Unlovely stands the rough and barren tree ;
No hint prophetic of grace yet to be
In bareness hid could alien vision find ;
When lo ! the springtide rains this dearth unbind
Till empty boughs bud out in greenery,
And soon far floats the ripened fragrancy
Of rosy blossoms clustering sun-steeped rind.
Thus may the human heart, kept hard and cold
By adverse poverty's bleak, blasting powers,
Burst into bloom undreamed it could unfold
'Neath summer-softening of Fortune's showers,
And Nature's generous sweetness be unrolled
In splendor of prosperity's fair flowers.

4

LAURESTINA.

In years agone within a garden old
Of distant city home, long vanished both,
Was reared a Laurestina's tender growth,
Exotic in a land of Northern cold ;
And on my memory as a little child
The fragile beauty of its rose-hued flowers
Was stamped forever, linked with gleeful hours
And faces dear that on my fresh life smiled ;
Now aging pain has led me to far shore,
With graves of those beloved beyond the sea,
And in a Tropic garden wild and free
I look on Laurestina bloom once more
A child again, glad with new truth there sprung,
That spite of Time the Soul is always young.

5

AMARYLLIS.

When roamed the Indian o'er wooded hills
And forests dense of verdant Carib isle ;
He saw 'mid tangled brush, by trickling rills,
Twinned scarlet lilies at his footsteps smile ;
And when alternate over ocean's waste
Old Europe's peoples sought a far exile,
These floral jewels with their splendor graced
The gardens that could solitude beguile.
On upright stem from spreading spathes of green
Still shall the brilliant Amaryllis shine
In days to come by eyes of mine unseen ;
Yet Joy of Beauty with its mood divine
But gladdens me to know though I be gone
That Nature's loveliness lasts ever on.

POINSIANA.

Outstretched and gaunt upon the circling air
The long limbs moveless lie ; stiff, stark, 'mid all
The waving rustlings of the landscape fair,
Or when their rattling pods from dryness fall ;
A very Death in Life ; no vernal sign
Betokens to the teeming world about
That at appointed time will bourgeon out
A sudden glory of rich, superfine,
And vivid color clothing o'er the tree
With carmine flowers scintillant with gold,
To startle vision that this lethargy
Such body spiritual could enfold ;
God's typic word of hidden Life in Death,
When fame forgets, and stirs no more Earth's breath.

RONDEAUS.



OUR STARRY FLAG.

Our starry flag—a stirring sight
When floating out its red and white
 To greet and cheer in foreign air ;
 We hold it ne'er so dear and fair,
So full of meaning and of might
As when beside its colors bright
No other ensigns ever quite
 In grace or power can compare
 With starry flag !

Its proud outwaving seems aware
Of all the star-states shining there
 To shed abroad their freedom's light !
 Oh, Native Land, at utmost height
Keep ever with a noble care
 Our starry flag !

A ROSE-LEAF SHELL.

A rose-leaf shell ; as petal light
Just fallen from a flower bright
Upon the golden tropic strand,
Yet cast upon the shining sand
By world-long swell of ocean's might,
Its beauty meets our wondering sight
With mystery of the sea bedight,
And Nature's secrets awe command
In rose-leaf shell.

In sunless deeps of color's night
Whence came this blushing tint of light ?
How could such fragile grace withstand
Unfathomed press of surges grand ?
God's laws His miracles indite
In rose-leaf shell.

THE POET'S LAND.

The Poet's land—it has no name ;
No map its boundaries proclaim ;
And though his steps rove everywhere,
He ever breathes his native air,
And holds 'mid changes feoff the same.
There ope the temple doors of Fame ;
There is Love's home of peerless Dame ;
And Summer smiles forever there
In Poet's land.

Its light beams from his soul aflame
With fancy's glow and beauty's aim ;
Ambrosia is its common fare,
And only gods its nectar share,
For lost Elysium became
The Poet's land.

THE OLD POETS.

The Poets old—ah, there they shine
On crowded shelf in bindings fine,
And yet they truly nowadays
Get less of reading than of praise ;
No longer Fashion knows the Nine.

Old Homer nods ; and none divine
With Virgil's former mystic line ;
Immortal Greeks wear faded bays
As Poets old.

In Hell unoped must Dante pine,
While Fairy Queen's a locked up scrine ;
Inglorious, mute, now Milton stays
Beside the Dramatist's dead plays ;
But Shakespeare's thumbed as quoting mine
'Mong Poets old.

ANN HATHAWAY.

Her Shakespeare said : " Ann hath a way ! "

When in youth's halcyon, blinding day

He thus to Shottery was led ;

Where graceful Art must sure have shed
O'er charms mature deceptive ray.

What way did marriage tie betray,

That, London-lodged, in love's decay,

" My Ann shall stay where she was bred ! "

Her Shakespeare said.

Did she, at night when down he lay,

Like Mrs. Caudle, say her say,

That as revenge, when will was read,

" I leave my wife my *second* bed ; "

Was all of his Ann Hathaway

Her Shakespeare said ?

SHAKESPEARE'S GIRLS.

Dear Shakespeare's girls—a lovely train
Immortal born from Poet's brain ;
 What model maid their traits combined
 In crucible of fusing mind
Till each did separate soul attain ?

Did his young daughters foreordain
Marina pure, Miranda fain,
 Perdita modest, Rosalind
 'Mong Shakespeare's girls ?

Or did his inspiration gain
From Her the Sonnets scarce explain,
 A Juliet true, a Celia kind,
 Or "Lady Tongue" but Love could bind ?
Who made sweet Page, French bevy vain,
 Dear Shakespeare's girls ?

SHAKESPEARE'S BOYS.

Dear Shakespeare's boys—a parlous few
Too cute for youth, as Gloster knew,
 "So wise, so young, do ne'er live long ;"
 And victims to Ambition's wrong
His Princely juvenals he slew.

Each Page but serves as word-play cue ;
His Roman Puppets tears bedew ;
 No real fun gladdens us among
 Dear Shakespeare's boys.

Did his own boyhood so imbue
With sadness, shrewdness, boys he drew ?
 Or did child Hamnet's death make strong
 Impress of likeness on his song ?
That thus precocious, doomed, askew,
 Are Shakespeare's boys ?



WOMAN AND MAN.



DEDICATION

TO

WILLIAM T. WALTERS.

If in a casket filled with jewels rare
A cluster of the humblest flowers were laid,
Though costly splendor should their bloom o'ershade
Some fragrance faint would mark their presence there ;
And just for sake of one remembered place
Wherein their simple redolence had birth,
They might be vested with a moment's worth,
And win 'mid precious gems slight welcome grace,—
Thus into temples of the highest Art,
Where genius has richest treasures brought,
Are borne these gathered leaves of rhythmic thought,
With Nature's touch alone to reach the heart ;
And should their value lie in memory of a name,
Thus linking them to thine will give their surest fame.

In every character there are unfathomable depths
which the poet can never analyze, but must only dimly
guess at, and still more dimly sketch them by the actions
which they beget."

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

I

REBECKAH.

Daughters of Heth—within my tent they stay,
These, Esau's wives, and scorn me with their eyes !
For know I not the thoughts that in them rise
For Esau's sake when Esau is away !
Within their half-wild hearts they mock this son
Who lingers at my side, in that he brings
No smell of fields, no blood-stained hands, nor flings
Low at my feet strength's reeking victim won ;
Yet what availed they 'gainst my daring skill,
And his adroitness, from distrust to gain
The first-born's blessing of dominion's rein,
To curb the future ? Though I had my will,
Their looks do taunt me till I weary of my life—
And Jacob, from my kin, shall only take a wife !

ESAU.

My brother comes—Arise, my men of might,
Go forth with me to honor in the land
The twin-born, who, at birth, with grasping hand
Clung to my spurning heel ; Now in my sight
He shall have grace—he is my father's son !

He comes with great array of gathered store,
And dreads my vengeance for the deeds of yore,
For craft-fed fears all noble trusts outrun !

He won my mother's love from me ; his art
My birthright from my starving weakness wiled,
And with his devilish subtily beguiled
My blessing from my blind old father's heart !

But still he is my brother ! Love stirs—and Hate is
dead,

And Love forgives ! “ He should be blessed ! ” So,
Isaac said !

3

LEAH.

Lo ! all these many years unloved, I love—

No slight, nor coldness, nay, nor hate avails

To quench my heart's well-spring that never fails

Though misery, like a stone, be rolled above ;

Shall he not turn to me some day, who knows

The patient waiting of untiring dream,

And catch, through sympathy, some earnest gleam
Of growing passion, from its light that glows
Forever yearning in my tender eyes ?

For but my father pitied, and made sure—

Well he and I knew Rachel's place secure—

To make my life of worth by wifely ties !

So if 'gainst love of theirs I sinned in sight of Heaven,
Through Love, for Love's sake, may be Love at last
forgiven !

JACOB.

Love filled me as thy fairness smote my eyes
When standing shyly 'mid the thronging sheep ;
Love overflowed, so I could only weep
And kiss thee, speechless with the glad surprise
That thou wert Rachel ! Nor e'er deemed it hard
To spend my youth in toil, 'neath scorching sun,
Or stung with frosts, since such long service done
Should bring the sweetness of my great reward !
Then on this Love whose single thought was thine,
Thy cunning father, for my labor's sake,
Grafted cold hate !—Leah's sin was this, to take
Love's duty from Love's right, a claim divine !—
Lo ! she is recompensed—dearer thy death-born child
Than all her elder brood whereon her sad Hope smiled !

VASHTI.

Ah ! this was he I called my lord and King,
For whose sake sought I to be worthy queen
Of life and land !—One moment's drunken spleen
Long years of love does to oblivion fling !
And that I would not stoop from my estate
Of queen and wife into a wanton's place,
And shameless cast the veil off this poor grace
His pride made senseless boast of, so to sate
The lustful eyes of wine-besotted men,
He makes decree to strike all wives through me !—
Sure Memucan has one who will not be
Slave unrebellious, so gall tips his pen !—
Whose loss was most, Oh, King ? From throne in
woman's trust
See, woman's loveless scorn thy Kingship treads in
dust !

AHASUERUS.

Oh, Vashti, Vashti ! queen of heart and throne,

By my own mad decree I wrought this pain

That never shall I see thy face again—

That face whose loveliness was all my own !

All mine alone, thy beauty and thy love !

Thy love that made thy beauty sacred seem,

And gave thee courage to resist, to deem

That sober sense would set thy pride above

My shallow vanity ! My injured one,

I cannot put thy banished grace away

That haunts me still !—Yet Memucan did say

That husbands should have rule !—Now, this is done,

Come, Cursed Counsellors of witless hours of wine,

To quench these memories drear some new device
divine !

ONE OF THE WIVES.

Oh, Prince of Israel, I am thy wife,
And mother of thy babes ! I sought not thee,
But thou didst take me from my land to be
Thine own ! I left all kin to share thy life !—
And now at this fanatic's word, thou'l rend
These heart-born ties! He says, this priest, that
He,
His God, ordains it ! Can this God then be
Jehovah, in whom Love and Justice blend
As thou hast taught ? Ye Hebrews Moloch hate
Because of children who pass through his fires !
Yet over Moloch Ezra's God aspires
By thrusting wives in hell ! Not such my fate
Shall ever rule ! This God, this priest, my love de-
fies !—
Thus, unexiled, my wifehood on thy bosom, dies !

8

EZRA.

Oh, Lord my God, Thy servant's heart is sore
For this Thy people's sin ! I did proclaim
Loudly before the King that wrath and shame
Should fall on those who would forsake Thee more—
And now these sons of Israel have ta'en
Strange heathen wives, the daughters of the land,
And broke, like punished sires, Thy stern com-
mand !
And prophet's burden Thou on me hast lain
To cry Thy judgments ! And the people weep,
While banished women look on me with hate,
And bid their children curse me in the gate
Whence thy go forth !—yet must I hard eyes keep,
For bondsmen to Thy vengeance all these weary years,
This nation's destiny fails not for woman's tears !

PANTHEA.

Oh, my beloved, what ecstacy, what bliss
To be again within thy tender arms !
To know that all thine own, from war's alarms
And captive's peril, I was spared for this !
For my poor beauty and rich queenly state
Were doomed the destined prize of kingly power—
Nay—tremble not—behold, I do not cower
From off thy breast with shame—As equal great
In conquest over nations or desire
Thus Cyrus stayed my poniard's self-aimed stroke,
And living love here called thee to invoke
Thy gratitude for grace !—Ah ! these inspire
Thy fervid zeal e'en life itself to freely spend
To prove my Abradates Cyrus' worthy friend !

CYRUS.

When of Panthea's grace Araspes spoke,
Still peerless in her grief o'er fortune's phase,
He marvelled that my heart was steeled by praise
Of conquering beauty 'gainst Love's thralling yoke !
Yet he was banished as its hapless slave ;
And she, who, thankful, by its power brought
Her noble husband to my cause, has sought
Her death on his red sword, and shares his grave !—
Love rules the spirit and enchains the mind ;
He who would men control must self command
From passion's influence, and seem to stand
Above the ills that lower natures bind !
And Cyrus, hailed as god by war's triumphant host,
Must, god-like, never fall 'neath human uttermost !

II

CLEOPATRA.

My Charmian, robe me in my royal state,
And with my regal diadem once more
Crown me for death—the asp I proudly wore
'Mid power's joy, frees me from abject fate !—
Suck close, O snake, where Cæsar kissed of old !—
For lo ! dead Anthony calls in my heart
His Egypt shall die queen !—The poison's art
Smites Iris down—my hot blood turns to cold—
But Charmian, cling thou to passing breath
That when Octavius shall anxious send
His messenger to claim my life—at end,
Thou may'st then answer though in pangs of death
To "Is this well?" with, "Ay, most worthy well in one
From kings descended!"—Dark !—Ah, Egypt's day is
done !

CÆSAR.

Rome waits for conquered Egypt—Egypt dies—
And when for Actium I triumph there
And eager rabble all expectant stare
For storied charms can never greet their eyes ;
And whisper to each other, “Where is she
That serpent of Old Nile who made a thrall
Of Anthony?” Ah, what a shade must fall
O'er laurelled pageantry, thus lacking thee !
Yet baffled so, beside thy golden bed
Where glorious still in crown and witching smile
Thou queenly slept, for just a moment's while
I envied Anthony !—Thus proudly dead,
I, Cæsar, give thee back to him in thy last home—
For lifeless captives make no welcome show at Rome !

MARIAMNE.

Think'st thou, O Herod, that my woman heart
Knows not true love from semblance of it worn
O'er jealous passion? Love is rightly born
Twin-souled, two mingled selves ne'er felt apart!
And ancient stories have unfailing told
That Love will die that the beloved may live!
But, thou, in tyrant wont, the charge dost give
If death takes thee, the tomb shall me enfold!
For vile suspicion makes thy pride unjust
Toward my chaste mind, lest other man should
please;
While false Salome can rob of trembling ease
Thy soul that has not learned pure love is trust!—
Thy purple cannot raise my higher, nobler race,
Nor can thy love, for my dead brother's blood, find
grace!

HEROD.

Here, here, among these desert wastes, alone,
My sorrows can find voice—my awful grief
In anguished cries may seek its sole relief—
For silence strangles on my life-thronged throne !
Ah, Mariamne, what to me are all
Earth's values now, crown, treasures, honors, state !
These gave the power that doomed thy hapless
fate !

Storm-whirled with rage, saw I not then would fall
Thy death upon my heart like lightning's stroke
To blast and wither, yet scorch with lurid pain
Akin to madness !—for since thou wert slain
The mortal love thy living beauty woke
Changed sudden to intenseness sounding hidden deeps
Of soul-self yet unknown that now these blood-tears
weeps !

15

PORTIA.

Where now, O Portia, is the lofty mood
That ere the ides of March cut deep and sure
In my soft flesh, that calmly to endure
The sharpest pain, might show the fortitude
Of Brutus' wife to share his brooding thought,
And hold the secret of that mighty deed ?—
But since at Elea my heart took heed
Of pictured parting full of sorrow wrought,
I weep o'er sad Andromache's distress
When “first in danger as the first in fame,”
Her Hector leaves her ! My own woe the same !
So change we women from our great to less !—
What message, Man, from Philippi ?—Ah !—Death,
once more
Though makest Cato's daughter worthy as of yore !

BRUTUS.

Ere Cæsar fell 'neath Pompey's statue, mute,
He saw *my* dagger's gleam, and looked at me ;
And yet once more I struck to set Rome free,
Nor faltering shrank to hear his "Et tu, Brute!"
So when at midnight through my tent did flare
Strange light about portentous shape that said,
"Again at Philippi we'll meet !" no dread
Disturbed my calm reply, "I'll meet thee there!"
Then as mid battle-din I sought for death
This "Evil Genius" turned off the swords,
The while I trembled not at boding words,
"But hand that Ceasar smote shall stay thy breath!"
Defeat shall ne'er make Brutus tyrant's living slave—
Unfearing still, this blade shall thus his freedom save !

ASPASIA.

Not mine the household use of woman's lot,
Soft slavery that custom's fetters bind ;
But sexless equalling of mind with mind,
And power's joy by intellect begot !
To stand with Pericles on level height,
With sage Anaxagoras soar o'er dream
Of childish faiths to truth of One Supreme,
Share e'en with Socrates pure wisdom's light,
And know my kindling thought through such allies
Will spread new fire 'mid world of smaller men—
This is life's sweetness, thrilling highest when
Love through Ambition with prophetic eyes
Sees while Earth honors Athens, her immortal fame
Shall Pericles enshrine linked to Aspasia's name !

PERICLES.

Dear friends, who sit around my dying bed,
Deem ye my dulling sense takes no more heed,
As proudly ye recount my every deed
That lustre on my name or Athens shed ?
My funeral speech, the matchless Parthenon,
Nine trophies for nine Victories, and all
Through fortune's might to other chiefs befall—
But ye recall not noblest part, whereon
Now lying here, my memory gladly rests,
That not one citizen through act of mine
Ere mourning wore !—Yet, city loved, 'twas thine
To smite those near me with hate's false behests—
Slew Phidias, exiled Anaxagoras years,—
Saw for Aspasia pleading Pericles in tears !

19

XANTIPPE.

Men deem my Socrates a worthy sage ;
They follow, harkening, where his footsteps roam—
(Had he no listeners he'd bide more at home—)
No care that cackling gilds no nestling's cage !
For while he questions in the market place,
And plays the oracle upon the street,
I toil and toil to make the bare ends meet
Of living for his babes and him ; small grace
Therefore I gain ; for when at idle hands
And wagging tongues I rail ; (one must have vent !)
With smiling eyes on some far vision bent
Like his own statues stony still he stands !—
He may be higher than my poor power to scan,
But I had happier been with nearer, meaner man !

SOCRATES.

“ How shall ye bury me ? ” my Crito asks—
First, Crito, of myself you must get hold ! —
Still thinks he, friends, this body dead and cold
Will be the Socrates whose latest tasks
Have been the happiness of proving truth
To comfort ye, that when I leave ye here
I go to blessed joys—be of good cheer,
Nor wail o’er empty flesh with grief or ruth,
While the immortal soul is living, safe ! —
Send home Xantippe, Crito, no loud cries
Should mar the patience, peace, of one who dies—
And bring me my last cup—Nay, wherefore chafe
That I delay not—go rejoicing on my way ? —
That God my journey prosper only, parting, pray !

HIPPARETE.

I, Hipparete, the lawful wedded wife
Of Alcibiades, pray this high court
Of Areopagus,—my last resort,—
To give me my divorce from his vile life !
I have borne much ere seeking here relief,
Forgiven oft, in that he swore my love
Was need of finest moods, raised him above
Low levels to high aims ; and stilled my grief
By tender hope to wean him to his best—
And yet this morn he passed my very door
In swan-shaped chariot, my gift of yore,
With Phrynne's yellow head upon his breast !—
That voice !—my name !—his open arms !—cease, heart,
thy strife—
Oh, Alcibiades, forgive thy foolish wife !

ALCIBIADES.

These women, Socrates, are merely toys
Swayed by a word ; a wife upon our breast
Will still accusing ; while like long-won quest
Fair Phrynnē stales. Wine, wit, have lost their joys,
And riot wearies. So I seek once more
Thy wisdom. Probe this changeful heart
With thy deep questions till some worthy part
Shall justify the love thine ever bore.—
Thine eyes are sharp, thy truths are cutting keen—
Ay, through all folly thou discernest clear
Strong aim with every breeze to safely steer
Toward fortune's port ; and thou hast ever seen
That whether it be war, love, skill, or best, or worst,
Thy Alcibiades must ever be the First !

LAIS.

All, every son of woman I have known
Are arrant slaves to never conquered sense !
Not e'en the strongest has the least defense
'Gainst my allurement ; just my smile, my tone,
Will whirl their brains like fumes of Samian wine !—
All tribute bring, fame, wisdom, youth, and age !—
Lo there, Diogenes, the crusty sage—
I did but stand where sunlight made me shine
From golden hair adown to snowy feet,
Stretched rosy hands, and breathed a luscious power
Forth from my lithesome grace, and he did cower
Beneath my sole whose touch turned spurning sweet !
These men are willing Helots of their natures vile ;
I, love-void Lais, joy to lash them with each wile !

DIOGENES.

Two shadows marred my sunshine ; one, a king,
Came offering aught a vanquished land might
yield ;
And I was wroth—no sceptre earth can wield
A better gift than heaven's light could bring !
Then Lais—a warm whiteness in the beams,
Soft, rounded, pulsing 'neath her flowing hair ;—
From eyes and palms a subtle flame did flare
All through me of sweet longing and mad dreams !—
Scorn-echoes stilled hot tumult of the blood,
And struggling up with awful battle throes
From life's abyssmal deeps, such shadow shows
Me worthless as all men—Light is sole good !—
And tempting Lais, dragging world-grimed souls to
dust,
Unwitting teaches that the watching gods are just !

AYESHA.

When Abu Thaleb to Mahomet said,

"Let be—think thine own thoughts—stir not old ways

To strife with new," the Prophet, eyes ablaze,
Cried, "Nay, God's Truth compels, though men strike
dead!"

And I, Ayesha, asked, "Is my fair youth
Not dearer than Kadijah's stricken years?"

"By Heavens, No!" he answered me with tears,
"She was the first who owned 'Thou hast the Truth!'"
True is this Truth to me, for I have heard

No other—I believe I do believe—

Grasp sure the power it yields—yet still perceive
A strange and subtle essence in these stirred
I know not—God's fire, blending, drawn to Faith's
Above,

That makes more worth her memory than all earthly
love.

MAHOMET.

In awful silences of solitude,
'Neath infinite far depths of solemn sky,
In rapturous soul-visions, even I
Discerned the whole world Truth ; not dim, or crude,
But radiant clear, as though the desert air
Pulsed golden with it, swept my being through,
Till reverent ecstasy stirred mission new
To lift from idols in like praise and prayer
Men needing Gospel—this—that God is Great,
And One, and all our human ways His will !
And he whom with Himself He thus doth fill
Hath never choice of muteness—Speech is Fate !
Though but a Voice I am His Prophet, chosen so,
His Prophet to all Earth—for them that hear not,—
Woe !

VITTORIA COLONNA.

Love made youth beautiful ; keeps tender still
My widowed heart, where joy destroying grief,
Like angel in disguise, brought woe's relief
By leading up to God rebellious will ;
And by His light amid this suffering shed
Came clearer sight of reverend church and creed—
Thus memory filled one part of Nature's need,
Religious trust my freer spirit fed ;
Yet still my searching intellect had turned
Both these to witless agents of unrest,
But Friendship's kindred mind with wakening best
To answering Thought pressed powers that in me
burned,
Thus, Michel, in sweet aim to share thy lofty heigh
My weaker being gained strength from thy matchless
might !

MICHEL ANGELO.

A long, lone life—yet now 'tis nearly done

My soul is glad that it was long and lone—

But consecrated solitude can own

Inspired dreams by Time to being won.

Ah, not for naught my Moses' head has shown

The Tauric horns of power ! On desert height

Must he have dwelt amid divinest light

Who brings to men the word of God in stone !—

More sacred than all popes to me was Art,

E'en when for Medici it wrought in snow,

Or skyward dome sublimed grand church below ;

Life's joy was there !—But one pain smites my heart,

That by death's awed I sought not memory's bliss,

And on Vittoria's brow laid one last, only kiss !

LEONORA D'ESTE.

Once more, Alphonso, hear my anguished prayer—

Set Tasso free—if but for thy own fame—

For as time goes men prize a poet's name

Far more than one mere princely—none will spare

To ban thee in long sorrow o'er his fate.

For sacred, rare, a precious thing apart,

Is Genius to Wisdom's kindred heart ;

And Patience ever on its ways should wait !

Then too his other gracious gifts of grace

Should woo thee from thy hard, relentless will

His cup of suffering to overfill

For guiltless guilt wrought by my hapless face !—

Alas ! what bitterness to be so near a throne

Whose splendors mock at love that makes a woman
lone !

30

TASSO.

Said some one I was mad ? Is madness pain,
And dungeon darkness, thirst, cold, or grief
At parting with beloved one, or belief
That friends are false, and foes would have me slain ?
Or is it ecstasy of rapturous hour
That only rarest spirits ever know,
When inspiration's lovely visions flow
Into word-harmony of living power ?
Is madness to have linked my deathless fame
To prince ungrateful ?—To have breathed in song
The tenderest passion ever deemed a wrong ?—
No poets' love was e'er a princess' shame !—
Mad thus, and prisoned here, still can my winged soul
flee
From freed Jerusalem, oh Leonore, to thee !

31

MARY STUART.

Shall I, born Queen, in Scotland's straitened way

Keep step like any single-natured dame ?—

My like such know not, though they judge and
blame !—

For through my complex make blood mixture plays,
Stuart and Guise, warm South and chilly North,

Will mark me as world's riddle to the end !

While in this one so many women blend

That fitting time draws different showing forth !

And every separate self needs suited mate

Joyed o'er, and lost unwept, as wax or wane

Sways of hid being—thus, Darnley, weak and vain,
French Chastelard, strong Bothwell's mastery great—
Each deemed in what he gained he only had won all—
While never yet one loved held Mary whole in thrall !

32

BOTHWELL.

Loud 'neath my dungeon roar the stormy waves !
Loud from my soul cries out my quenchless ire
'Gainst guilt as deep as mine in curses dire
But sea-gulls hear as foam each strong wing laves !
Go, bear them, birds, to Scotland's distant shore,
And shriek them in the shrinking ears of band
That shared the blood-stains on my fettered
hand !—
Oh ! for a breath of mountain air once more !—
These chains outweigh a crown !—Yet to be free
To wreak my vengeance on the churls that fear
The love that won my Queen, so bound me here
With deeper craft than mine ! Ah, fool, to flee
In sudden madness—that besets my tortured brain
Whene'er my anguish hears her last farewell again !

MARIE ANTOINETTE.

Alas ! To prison-bourne from palace-birth,
With queenhood, wifehood, motherhood, all gone,
Accursed by gory hate hard as this stone,
What holds my hopeless being on this earth ?
For but one thing is merciful and sweet
 Amid this maelstrom of bewildering fate—
 Sleep gives me back my children, husband, state,
My youth, my throne, the glad world at my feet !—
Grief only, loss-born, marks all these not dreams !—
 Yet 'mong the figures that bewhirl my life,
 Kings, courtiers, statesmen, mad canaille in strife,
One stands alone, and *is*, and never seems,
A Titan-soul—true-royal—kindred—strong to Can—
Marred face with human eyes—dead Mirabeau—a
 Man !

MIRABEAU

Queen of Roi Faineant, in thy royal strait
Great Queen to me—not woman—what the charm
Spelled me, my order's renegade, to warm
In knightly promise for thy threatened state?
Ah me ! She felt 'mid wild Riquetti blood,
Self-fouled and banned, the pulse of old noblesse ;—
Through heirdom of five centuries—no less—
Her words, like trumpet, stirred chivalric good !—
And yet—these millions—trodden, howling brutes,
Who deem her Circe dooming them to mire—
Ye too are human—God ! what suffering dire
Made me their brother ?—Reason still refutes
For them past Chivalry !—O Earth, for this my part
Give power—to bear all these, a queen, France, on my
heart !

35

JOSEPHINE.

Forth from thy palace, from thy throne, thy heart,
I go, Napoleon ; but these bitter tears
Flow not for splendors lost, dead hopes, past years,
But that with me thy glory will depart !
Though higher in the sight of trembling world
Thy power's impetus may raise thee still,
Yet hollow 'neath thy pageantry and will
Waits the abyss wherein shall all be hurled !
For while thy destiny was linked to mine
Fate brought thee kingdoms, Fortune gave her
smile,
Since first arose o'er that far Western isle
Thy trusted Star, which soon will cease to shine,
As thou, in quenching love, its mystic light shall
drown,
For unto *me*, not thee, was prophesied a crown !

36

NAPOLEON.

Blind world of Europe, on this rock sea-bound
The fear of me shall rule while mortal state
Holds me the One whom will-compelling Fate
Ordained to compass purposes profound !—
All cycling time awaited pregnant hour,
That marked commencement of another age,
When I, who was To Come, on History's page
Wrote fadeless name of destined fame and power !—
“Out of the West,” the Eastern Prophet said,
“Should beam Earth's next Avatar's guiding star !”
I was the Secret of the Sphinx—afar
Cld lands expected new, enlightening head !—
Peace was my war-aimed goal—peace ripening vast de-
signs—
Mind-realm, fire barred—this, too, is East—life's star
still shines !

CHARLOTTE VON STEIN.

Love, Goethe ! thou hast known but love of love—
Mere tempting simulacrum of the true,
From knowledge craving born, that would eschew
To set ripe passion sentiment above !
Test absence ever thine allegiance broke,
As Italy outrivalled link of years ;
Yet land and song I could forgive with tears,
But not thy yielding to a lower yoke !
And surely thou, who makest human fate
Thy endless study, knowest every sin
Holds germ of its own punishment within,
Nor canst expect to 'scape the common fate !
Thus shall this Christiane with vengeance due repay
Youth's prudent, fickle heart that loved, and rode
away !

GOETHE.

The great world-gift was mine, that life and time
Transmute to Immortality ! All things
Without but fed the inner springs
Of Poesy's soul-fount, till stream sublime
Of Nature-knowledge marked the garnered best
That Thought and Feeling gave the written page
From Youth's earth-roving to sequestered age,
Through Sturm and Drang to Weimar's peaceful rest
Love, pain, and sorrow, friendships rare and high,
Art, Science, honors, passion, all shed light
On mortal deeps that cast but spray to sight—
Yet still I crave more light until I die !
For soon will night shades close o'er Goethe's busy
day ;
But from the human heart shall Faust ne'er pass
away !

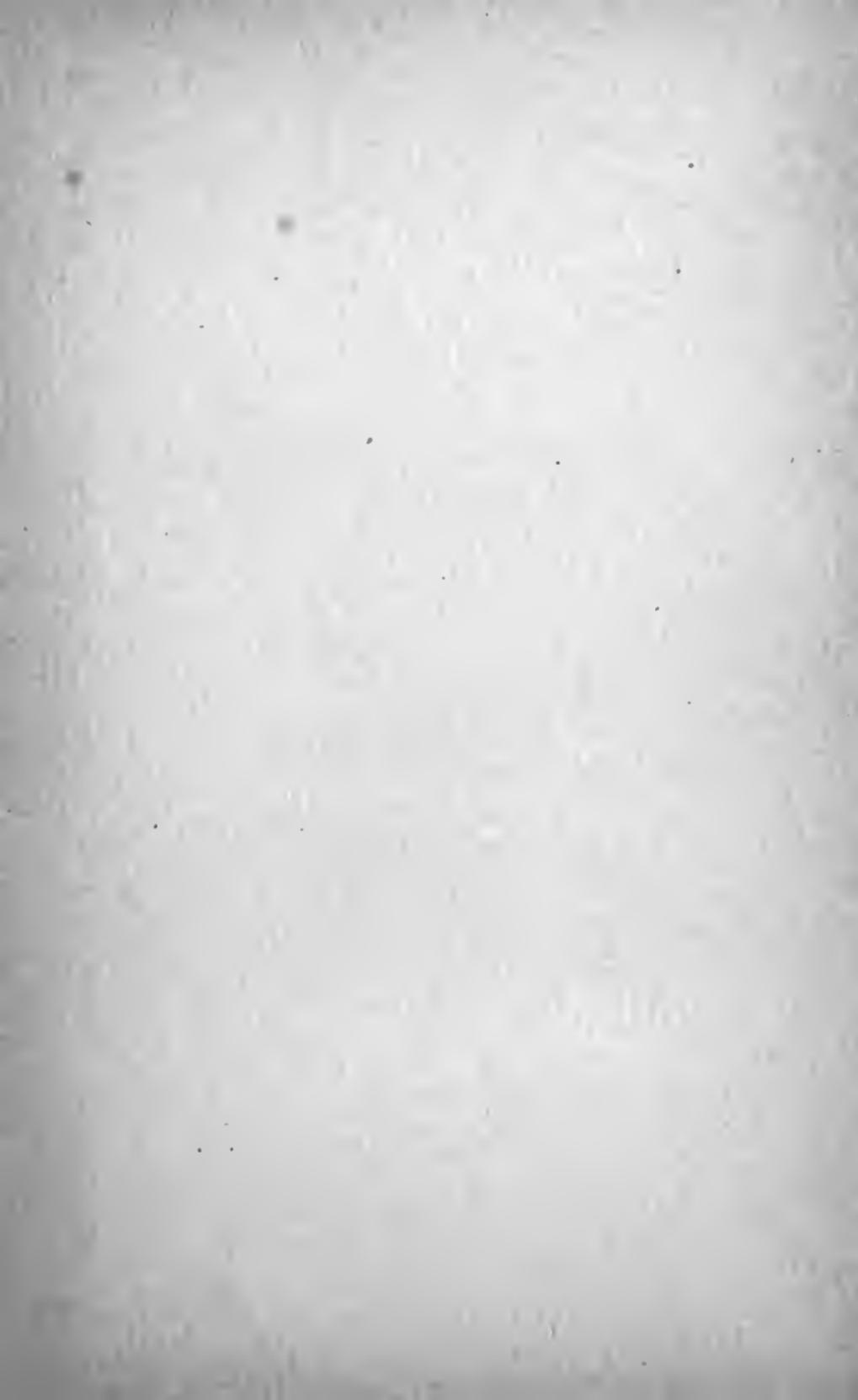
CARLOTTA.

Once more I hear the awful sound of war—
And like one rising from a silent tomb
I wake to watch the dawning of thy doom,
The battle quenching of thy pallid star !
The murdered dead and I will speechless sit
Close, close beside thy humbled, tottering throne,
The while our discrowned brows shall mock thine
own
All shrunken from its circlet's olden fit !
His mouldering shroud, my mourning garb shall
sweep
Across thine ermine's flow. When o'er thy soul
The guns of Victory thundering pæans roll
One far death-volley shall the echoes keep !
Through strife-red mists, O Louis, sybil-like, I see
Some Waterloo avenging Mexico, and Me !

40

LOUIS NAPOLEON.

Before Sedan, a wierd, prophetic dream
Sleep murdered since ;—I stood in front of throne,
Long waited for, and through skill destined, won,
And on it loomed, what first did shadow seem,
Majestic, sceptered, in imperial state
The Great Napoleon—power supreme of will
Out-flowed from him my soul upholding still
As terror hearkened to the Voice of fate—
“Son of Hortense,” he said, “mine is this throne,
France-given while France is—Yet that I died
Uncrowned in human sight, none else beside
Henceforth upon it shall die crowned !” Then lone
From barren rock I saw him gaze on empty seat—
Saw Maximilian’s sword, and D’Engheins’, o'er it,
greet !

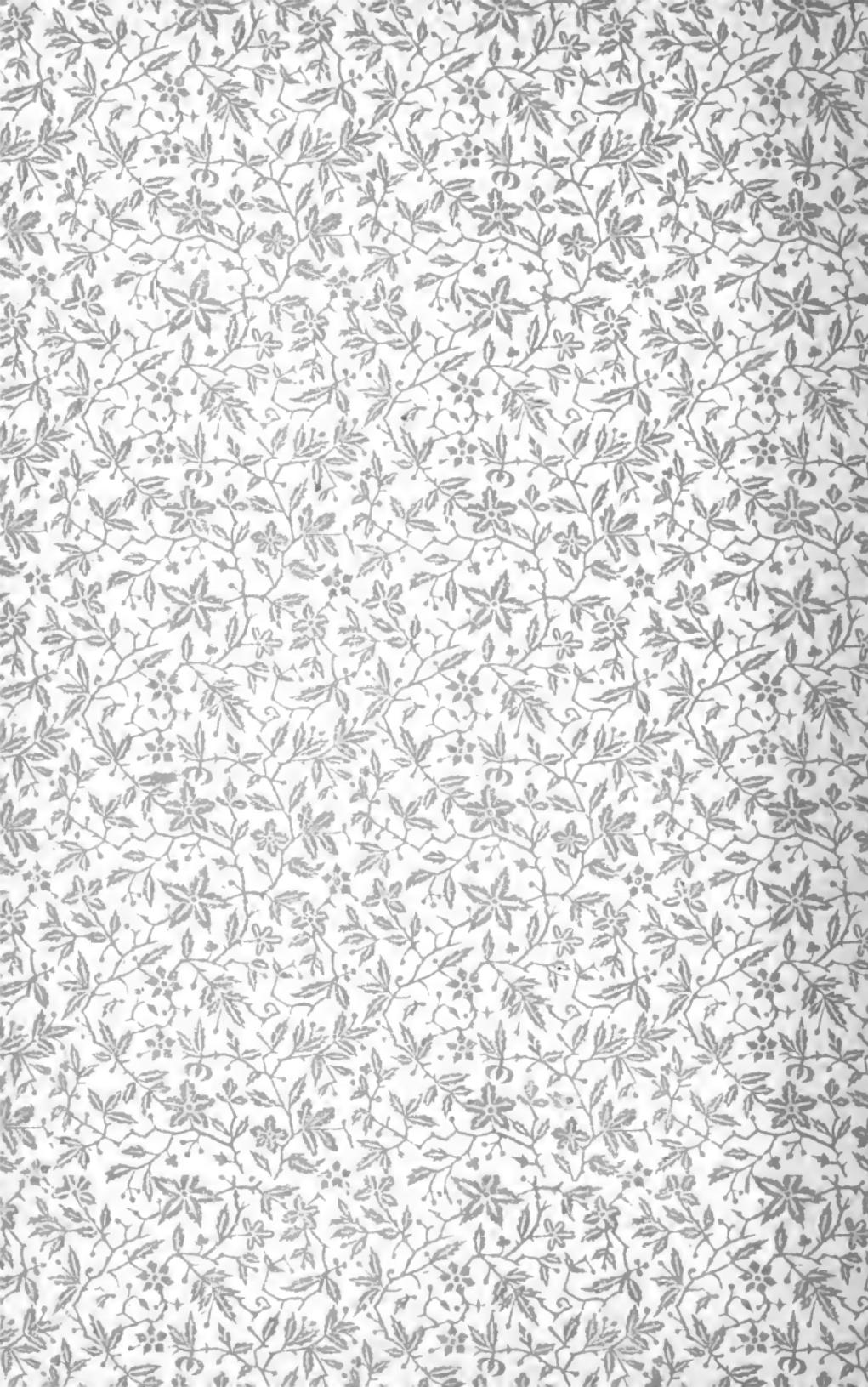


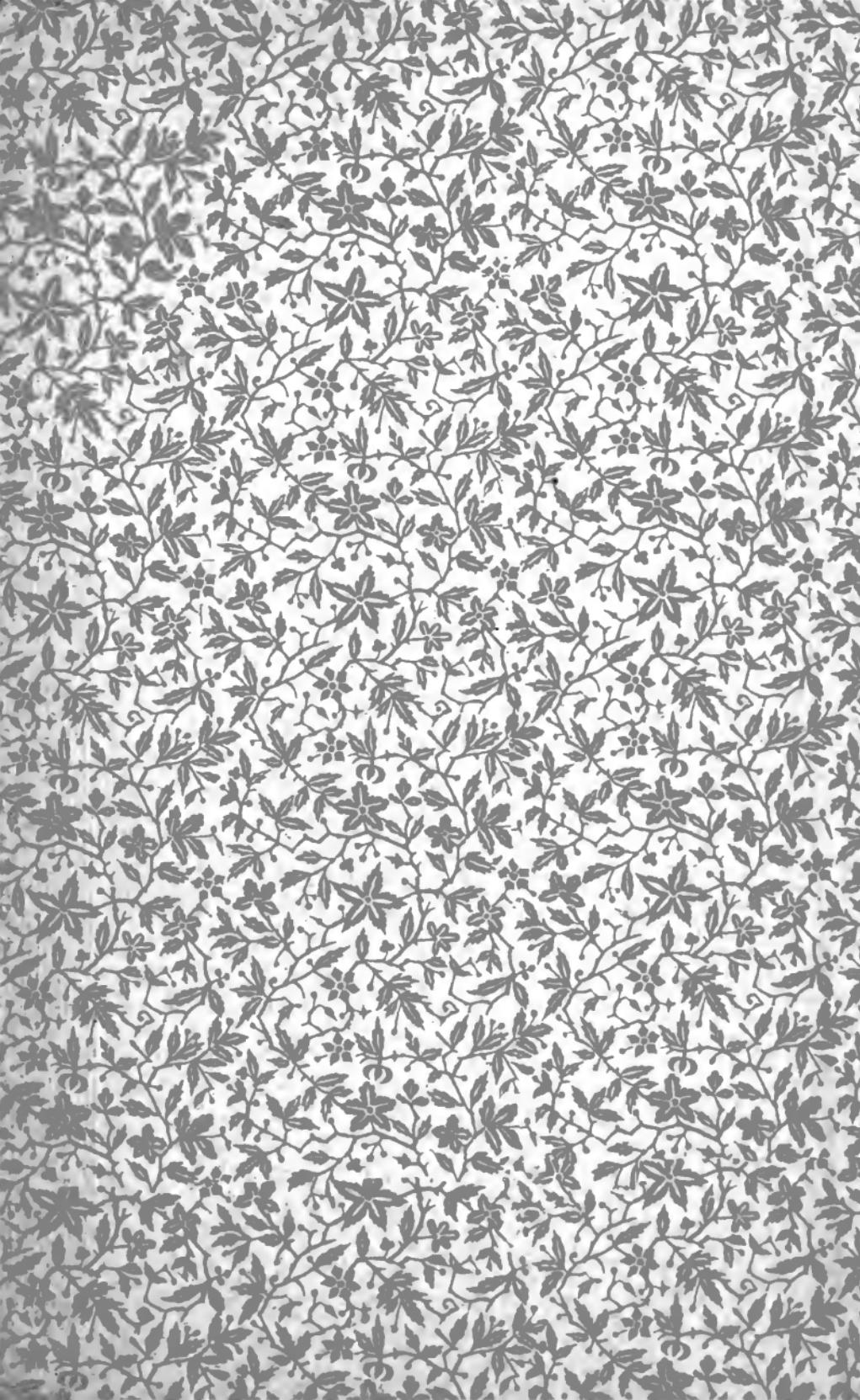












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